



DOOMSDAY WONDERLAND

BOOK 04

Beards And Tails

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Doomsday Wonderland

(末日乐园)

by

Beards And Tails

Synopsis

What if earth devolved into a apocalyptic hellhole? What if you found out you not only have to survive just one apocalyptic event but have to struggle through multiple worlds with different end-world scenarios? And you get to meet more superpowered crazies than you can imagine!

Presenting the worst nightmare that your weird doomsday prepper neighbour with a bunker full of canned beans could have, Domsday Wonderland is a novel filled with subverted tropes, non-OP characters and a female friendly label which offends all politically correct fanatics.

As 'lucky' humans evolved to posthumans with abilities to adapt to the New World or mutate into disgusting duoluozhongs to survive, follow Lin Sanjiu as she struggle through the multiple challenges to just live one more day... and make sense of this New World that will no longer be the same.

Acknowledgement

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Chapter 301: The Final Chapter of Doomsday Wonderland, This Is The Truth...

"Hey, stop sleeping. Our boss came to the company just now."

Through her drowsiness, Lin Sanjiu heard a familiar voice drifting from somewhere very far away. She felt someone nudging her. Lin Sanjiu opened her eyes in a daze. She blinked and froze for a few seconds. It was only then that her brain processed that murky voice.

The computer in front of her was in standby mode, and the window screensaver had been changing non-stop. It was now showing a picture of a large peony she had already seen for over a year. Lin Sanjiu rubbed her eyes.

She felt her eyelids under her fingers. Her arms felt slightly numb. She could also feel the poor blood circulation in her legs which stemmed from her long sitting time. These realistic sensations gradually grew clearer as her drowsiness and confusion faded.

"You're a pro. You must have had a deep sleep. We found you sleeping even after we came back from lunch." The colleague, who was speaking to her, stuck his face out from the adjacent cubicle. He flashed an ambiguous smile, "You didn't sleep well last night? What did you do?"

Lin Sanjiu opened her pair of amber eyes and stared at him blankly. This particular male colleague of her was exceptionally sweet to all the females in their office. To put it in another way, he was a little frivolous. Sometimes, the way he spoke was also—

"Wait, where am I?"

Lin Sanjiu shuddered. While she took a very quick glance around, she suddenly jolted up from her chair as if she had been electrocuted...

Unfortunately, she didn't feel the firm, familiar muscles in her legs support her. Instead, her body felt very heavy, as if it wasn't listening to her. She accidentally hit the corner of her cabinet with her shin. It hurt so much that she even took a deep breath.

"Ugh..."

The pain instantly made her mind a lot clearer. She noticed her male colleague's surprised expression from the corner of her eyes. "It's nothing. I think I just had a dream," she muttered.

"It was a dream, right?" Lin Sanjiu thought to herself, feeling a little uncertain, despite her answer.

The tall, rich, handsome boyfriend that she killed, the desiccated bodies in Hyperthermal Hell, the scary-looking duoluozhongs, her companions with their different appearances and characters... Since the perceived sense of time is different in a dream compared to reality, in her dream, it felt as though a couple of years had already passed. She even had a "what-is-this-year" feeling. Lin Sanjiu slowly returned to her seat again. She sat in a daze for some time before she laughed at herself.

That dream was as if it was another part of her life. However, when she woke up, she was still just a lowly office employee in a big city.

"What's this? I'm really quite imaginative..." she shook her mouse and her screen lit up again with the desktop picture of a grass field with blue skies and white clouds. "If I write this dream down, I think I can have a novel."

Her dream faded into the background, as she came back to reality. She started worrying about the mundane things in her life once more, "Oh, I think I need to hand in some report and data this afternoon."

Shaking her head, Lin Sanjiu opened her folder in a well-practiced manner. She stared blankly at the screen for a while

before she started typing noisily on her keyboard.

Apart from her exceptionally realistic and eventful dream, this was an uninteresting day for Lin Sanjiu. There wasn't even anything worth mentioning. When it was almost the end of her workday, her slightly outdated iPhone suddenly lit up.

"Don't forget, you have a blind date with that doctor tonight. Do you need me to bring some cosmetics over for you?"

The person who messaged her was Zhu Mei.

Lin Sanjiu looked at that name, and her hand froze as she fell into a daze. After a few seconds, she replied, "Okay, please bring some mascara for me."

It was as if she could see the image of Zhu Mei dried-up corpse from her dream clearly in front of her...

"It's such a bother. Why did I dream of something so irksome?"

Lin Sanjiu sighed and locked her computer. When her screen turned black, she saw a reflection of a large, snow-white face. A pair of hollow black eyes were staring back at Lin Sanjiu.

She should have screamed when she saw that. However, Lin Sanjiu scared herself with her instinctive reaction. She stood up and lunged her body forward. Balancing her body on one leg, she kicked backward with her other leg. The chair she was sitting on rolled backward and hit the person behind her directly.

"Ouch! What are you doing?"

The slightly frivolous male colleague held his abdomen. He exaggerated his movements and voice, "I just wanted to see who you were messaging. Do you really have to... Ouch..."

Lin Sanjiu was a little stunned. She looked down at herself. Her calf muscles, which she barely trained since she was usually desk bounded, were starting to ache from this sudden burst of activity.

"Sorry, you scared me," she smiled at the male colleague and tried

to sound as friendly as possible.

She felt as if there was something in the depths of her mind disturbing her and it made her feel very uneasy. After watching her male colleague grumbling as he packed his things and then left, Lin Sanjiu took a deep breath. She bent over and started tidying her desk. She switched off her computer and decided to tell Zhu Mei about her own unusual behavior when they met later.

The best thing about this company she was working in was that everyone could leave on time. Almost everyone would leave on the dot unless their team leader requested for them to stay. As she was distracted, after Lin Sanjiu took ten minutes to pack up her things, she realized that she was the only person left in the office.

As they had an electronic door lock, the last person could lock the office door after entering a password. It reduced the hassle of handling keys. Lin Sanjiu tapped the device with her employee card and her fingers hovered over the combination keypad for a moment. However, she just couldn't remember the password.

"Come on. What's wrong with me today..."

After she called her colleague and got the password, she finally took the lift downstairs. Zhu Mei was carrying a large paper bag and was already waiting for her. She certainly brought more than a tube of mascara.

Her best friend was so eager to see her get married soon that she seemed to be even more anxious than Lin Sanjiu. The restaurant for the date had an elegant atmosphere. They reached it 30 minutes early. After Zhu Mei gave her a makeover, Lin Sanjiu almost couldn't recognize herself.

"I feel rather uneasy today..." After the two of them sat down, Lin Sanjiu said softly to Zhu Mei while they waited for the doctor. "I had a dream this afternoon—"

"Hi! Doctor Chen. We're here!"

Before she could complete her sentence, Zhu Mei stood up suddenly and waved her arms at a young man standing not far from them. Zhu Mei only noticed what Lin Sanjiu had said before after Doctor Chen sat down and they introduced themselves. "What's your dream about? Doctor Chen, she was saying that she had a dream."

Looking at the plump man in front of her, Lin Sanjiu forced a smile, "It's nothing. I just dreamt that it was the end of the world."

"That's interesting!" Doctor Chen seemed pleased with Lin Sanjiu's looks. His smile widened and he started rambling, "Dreams help to fulfill human needs. Maybe, you have some needs that can only be satisfied in an end-world scenario... I went to Germany for a one-year overseas exchange during my university years. I learned quite a lot about psychology..."

Maintaining a polite smile, Lin Sanjiu felt as if her face was going stiff.

To be honest, Doctor Chen could hold a rather interesting conversation. He didn't seem like a bad person... However, as time went by, Lin Sanjiu felt like she was on tenterhooks. She felt as though she had forgotten something very important. Her thoughts had long drifted off. After a while, the two other people noticed this. Zhu Mei even pinched Lin Sanjiu lightly under the table.

"Excuse me, I need to use the restroom," Lin Sanjiu said hurriedly. Then, she left her table as if she needed to escape.

"What's wrong with me today?" she couldn't help asking herself while she sat on top of a toilet bowl cover, lost in thought.

"What if something suddenly attacks me when I'm so unfocused. Huh? What attack?!"

Lin Sanjiu scratched her hair. She found this worrying thought hilarious.

After she sat in the toilet for some time, as if trying to escape the

current situation. She gradually calmed herself. Seeing that she had stayed in the toilet for quite some time, Lin Sanjiu stood up, "I shouldn't leave Zhu Mei there alone. It must be awkward..." she mumbled to herself as she opened the cubicle door.

However, her body stopped without any reason.

Following which, it was as if her body was acting on its own. Lin Sanjiu couldn't explain her own actions. She took out her phone and activated her camera. Then, she squatted and slipped her phone through the gap of the door and took a photo with the camera while she looked upward.

She pulled back her hand. The photo on her screen was a little blurred. It showed the bottom part of a basin and there was nothing unusual.

"Luckily, there isn't anyone around. I am sure someone would think I'm a pervert." She shook her head and laughed before she placing her phone back into her pocket.

Even though she had composed herself, the second half of the dinner date did not go as well as they had hoped. Doctor Chen probably noticed that his date was preoccupied so they ate silently for the next ten over minutes. Zhu Mei tried to make their conversation more lively but she knew that the blind date was a failure. Doctor Chen wiped his lips and called for the waiter.

"Let me pay for this meal. Keep your wallets, ladies," he said in a rather gentlemanly manner. He turned to the waiter and asked, "How much is the bill?"

"It is \$382, sir." The very young waiter looked at the bill in his hand and asked, "Would you like to pay by credit or cash?"

"Um, cash." Doctor Chen smiled at Lin Sanjiu, "I'm a person that just can't get used to mobile payments, I feel more at ease when I bring cash around."

Lin Sanjiu nodded politely. She watched him as he took a few

pieces of blue paper currency from his wallet.

He was holding money currency from Kisaragi Station World.

Chapter 302: After The End

In that overly realistic and detailed dream she had during her afternoon nap, Lin Sanjiu remembered Kisaragi Station's banknote very clearly. It was made of a sort of plastic material so it was slightly translucent. It had a shade of blue between the color of the sky and the sea so it made a strong impression on her.

However, it should not appear here.

When Lin Sanjiu saw those blue notes, an "ah" slipped from her lips. She regretted her reaction the very next second. It was as if that had triggered something. The atmosphere at the table suddenly changed. Even though she quickly looked down, that had already attracted the attention of the other people sitting at the table. They looked at her for some time before turning away. Lin Sanjiu adjusted her expression and looked up again. This time, the money in Doctor Chen's hand had already changed back to the familiar pink notes with the picture of a president just like in her memory.

"Did I make a mistake?"

"What's the matter?" Doctor Chen looked at her a little puzzled while he handed over the money in his hands. The gentle background music in the restaurant was just as soothing as before.

"No, it's nothing," Lin Sanjiu tried her best to give an amiable smile as she felt a bead of cold sweat running down her back. Through her peripheral vision, she spotted another abnormality at their table. At this moment, her muscles were all tensed up, but she really wished that she wasn't showing any goosebumps, "I accidentally bumped my leg against the table. It's alright."

She hoped her own voice didn't sound that shaky to the others.

For dinner, Zhu Mei had ordered lamb chop with black pepper sauce. The restaurant served the dish with the steaming black

pepper sauce in a small silver sauce boat. After Zhu Mei had finished her meal, she casually placed the small silver sauce boat beside her dinner plate.

Right now, Lin Sanjiu could see the reflection of Zhu Mei's abnormal face on the curved surface of that silverware.

Zhu Mei was sitting beside Lin Sanjiu and was looking in Doctor Chen's direction. Even though she didn't turn her head to face Lin Sanjiu, she was staring firmly at Lin Sanjiu sideways. Her black pupils were so far to the sides of her eyes that they were almost completely hidden, her eyes were almost just white.

The silver sauce boat reflected a pair of snow-white eyeballs which were fixated on Lin Sanjiu. "Normal people shouldn't be able to do this, right? Why isn't Doctor Chen noticing this?"

Lin Sanjiu felt as if she was near a bed of needles just sitting beside Zhu Mei.

"Alright, we should leave now." Lin Sanjiu forced a smile when she said this. As a quick thought flashed in her mind, she turned to look at the side-view of Zhu Mei's face and said, "I was under the impression that the money he was holding was blue. Isn't that strange?"

As soon as Lin Sanjiu said those words, Zhu Mei's pupils shot back to the middle of her eyes.

"Blue? It must be the light. Your eyes were probably playing tricks on you," Zhu Mei laughed turning her fair, moisturized and slightly plump face to Lin Sanjiu. "Do you want to have a sleepover at my place tonight?" she asked Lin Sanjiu with that same familiar face.

Lin Sanjiu forced herself to swallow the immediate "no" that she was about to blurt out. After hesitating for a few seconds, she shook her hand rejectingly and laughed, "If I go back with you, we won't stop chatting. I will be too tired at work tomorrow. I won't

go!"

Zhu Mei looked at her for a second and slowly responded with a smile. She didn't say anything else.

When they were walking out of the restaurant, Lin Sanjiu felt the cold breeze from the air-conditioner at the entrance. She couldn't help shivering a little as her body was covered with cold sweat. Even though Doctor Chen had kindly offered to drive both of them home, Lin Sanjiu couldn't maintain her fake composure much longer. She gave the excuse that she was tired and bid both of them farewell hurriedly. She slipped into a cab, almost as if escaping. It was only then that she felt slightly relieved after taking a few quick breaths.

"Where do you want to go?" the driver asked her after a few seconds. She could only see the black shadow of his frame.

Just when Lin Sanjiu was about to utter "Fortune", she suddenly paused.

"Where? Shouldn't I be going home?"

She almost saying "Fortune Westerns". That was the name of an estate in the most expensive and luxurious part of town. In her dream, Lin Sanjiu had moved there because of a person named Ren Nan.

Obviously, she couldn't afford to live in such an upscale estate. The dream was certainly too realistic. Lin Sanjiu held her forehead and suddenly found herself at a loss.

"If that's the case, what is my address again?"

Lin Sanjiu felt as if someone was hammering her left skull. Tolerating the intense headache, she tried to remember her own address.

"There is something very wrong..."

"Miss, what's wrong? Where do you want to go?" the driver asked

again, probably because the passenger in the back seat wasn't responding.

"Wait. Give me a minute..." Lin Sanjiu massaged her left temple. Due to her headache, her breathing grew heavy, "Let me think..."

There was total silence in the car for one second.

Suddenly, without any warning, the driver's voice became very gentle. He turned his head slightly and lowered the volume of his voice. "Do you want to go home?" he asked softly as if to show his patience and understanding.

That gentle tone of voice somehow came as a sudden jolt to Lin Sanjiu. She suddenly felt goosebumps all over her body. Her head was still throbbing badly but Lin Sanjiu couldn't care less. She gulped and stared at the driver's silhouette. Her fingers were already on the handle of the car door.

The door was locked. She couldn't open it.

She didn't know why but she had a very strong intuition that she should not give a confirmatory reply. It was as if there was something in her mind warning her. Unfortunately, the warning came too late.

"Did you forget your own address?" the driver asked in a gentler tone. His voice was like a muscle relaxant. Hearing it made Lin Sanjiu feel like she just wanted to sink into a sofa and sigh.

"But, how can a person forget their own address?" the driver answered his own question.

Though her head hurt badly and she was feeling very flustered and anxious, she suddenly felt a wave of ease and security. Lin Sanjiu knew that she shouldn't trust those feelings but she couldn't help closing her eyes. Her shoulders relaxed and her fingers slipped from the door handle.

"There must be something very wrong here. Don't you think so, miss?" the driver's voice dissipated in the tranquil atmosphere in

the cab like a mist, making Lin Sanjiu feel more relaxed.

As the driver turned his head to look at her, Lin Sanjiu lifted her heavy eyes.

He was wearing a baseball cap and a tan jacket. However, the space between the cap and his collar was just a patch of black nothingness. There wasn't anything. There wasn't a face. There wasn't a neck. Lin Sanjiu stared blankly as the driver raised his empty sleeve and reached for her.

Lin Sanjiu felt a sharp pain in her head as if something had pierced through her brain.

"Move! Quick!" an extremely furious voice yelled at her from an unknown location.

Chapter 303: Lin Sanjiu Finds Herself In A Fleshy Cavity

There was a milk-like vapor in the air. It was thick and sticky. It moved slowly, almost as if it was alive. Little by little, it entered Lin Sanjiu's nostrils. Her eyelashes were just fluttering moments ago. Before any light could even enter her amber eyes, her eyes fell shut again, uncontrollably.

Lin Sanjiu woke up.

This time, she was fully aware that she had woken up from a dream. When she sat up, she felt all her muscles screaming at once, probably because she was in an unnatural position for a long time. However, that did not affect Lin Sanjiu's sensations. She could feel strength coursing through her body once more—a familiar, formidable strength.

Lin Sanjiu flexed her fingers a few times. After recovering her strength, she slowly stood up. Everything about her surroundings was confusing. She didn't know if it was very foggy or if it was night time. She could only see constantly morphing deep dark purple color around her. That was the only thing she could see but it wasn't unpleasant.

As the constantly changing purple washed over her whole body like gentle waves, it brought a mesmerizing sense of comfort and warmth. She couldn't hear a single sound and any sort of disturbances which came with it. She only felt an everlasting peace. She did not need her thoughts, her battles, and her worries. She only needed the changing colors that would soothe everything.

"Maybe, I'm dead. Maybe, this is heaven?"

Before she could hold that fragmented thought for half a second. It disappeared. Lin Sanjiu wasn't even aware that such a thought had crossed her mind.

Was she standing now? Or was she sitting? Was she lying down? She just wasn't sure. One moment she was walking and the other moment she was floating. She could still feel the strength in her body but Lin Sanjiu felt that she no longer needed it.

As she sunk in this gentle comfort, she suddenly felt a slight pain. She couldn't tell which part of her body was hurting. It was as if her body had already melted. The pain could be from her leg or her back. Though the pain was trivial, it interrupted her peacefully floating sensation. It was extremely irritating. Lin Sanjiu wanted to wait for the pain to go away and return to the gentle embrace of her purple surroundings.

However, she felt a second painful prick. It just continued. Lin Sanjiu wanted to swat that sensation away but she didn't know where it was coming from. Third, fourth, fifth... The pain rained down on her and soon it became a torture. Lin Sanjiu let out a soft disgruntled noise and felt her body once more. She opened her eyes after the third prick.

The purple fog had disappeared as if it had never even existed.

"You're finally awake!" a familiar voice rang out. "Quick, get up!"

Lin Sanjiu thought she heard someone speaking into her ears. After half a second, she realized that it was from her own mind. "Mrs., Mrs. Manas?" she blurted out unconsciously.

When she said that name, she felt a strange sense of long-lost unfamiliarity. "Where... am I?" There was dusky darkness around her as if it was just dawn. There was barely any light around her. There was just a sort of formless chaos around her. The wisps of milky vapors that were floating around made the most striking impression on Lin Sanjiu. They had a heavy and sticky consistency. They flowed toward Lin Sanjiu like a tangible substance once it detected her presence.

"Don't breath that in!" Mrs. Manas warned just when that 'milk' was about to touch the tip of Lin Sanjiu's nose. Lin Sanjiu quickly

covered her nose and mouth. She didn't dare to touch that thing so she lowered her head and dodged it. However, the 'milk', which was now behind her, turned around and reached out for her like a white tentacle. This time, more 'milk' flowed toward Lin Sanjiu as if she was standing on lowlying grounds.

Lin Sanjiu immediately took a step outward, dodging. When her feet landed on the ground, she heard a squelch. The ground felt strange. It was as if she had stepped into a puddle of soft mud on the ground after a heavy rain. It was soft, squishy and even had a disgusting bounciness. It was then that she snapped out of her dull confusion and finally was somewhat aware of her true surroundings.

It felt as though she had been thrown into a large mouth.

The pink fleshy walls rose and fell like rhythmic breathing. Some unknown substance was oozing out from the fleshy walls. The dark red "floor" beneath her feet reflected some light. This place wasn't that large. Lin Sanjiu tore part of her clothes and used it to wave away the wisps of "milk" and could see the entire area of the place she was in. The thing that shocked her the most wasn't that she was in a weird fleshy prison. It was the fact that she wasn't alone.

This place was filled to the brim with people. There were lying and sitting down. Stacking up on each other, like dead fishes falling from a fisherman's net. There were multiple small hills of humans. Apart from their rising and falling chests which proved that they were still alive, Lin Sanjiu almost couldn't find any other vital signs which differentiated them from the dead.

She knew the faces of the people who were lying the closest to her. They were the Paleoindian, the tree-bark man, the Zhongshan suit youth, Faun... Almost everyone that entered the pocket dimension was here with her. She even spotted the Porcelain Vase who was lying on the ground, motionlessly. A wisp of white vapor hovered near Porcelain Vase.

"Ah, I'm in a pocket dimension, right?" Lin Sanjiu suddenly remembered everything. Her head hurt a little as her memories returned all at once. "Don't tell me Smiling Mermaid sent so many people into this pocket dimension after us?"

Mrs. Manas did not answer. She did not seem to know the answer.

Another wisp of "milk" headed toward her face. Lin Sanjiu quickly swatted at the vapor violently with the cloth in her hands. After she chased away that vapor, she crouched down and tried to wake Faun as he was lying closest to her. However, when Lin Sanjiu saw his body, she frowned.

"Something isn't right."

As Lin Sanjiu had just woken up from a comatose state, unavoidably, her mind worked a little slower. Despite that, she stopped her outstretched hand. She looked around at the other people and then at her own body.

"How long have I been here?" Lin Sanjiu mumbled.

"Frankly, I'm not sure," Mrs. Manas sighed, "I only woke up a few hours earlier than you."

Lin Sanjiu swatted away the unrelenting wisps of "milk" near her face once again. She checked the condition of her body carefully. Just as in her memory, her sculpted flexible muscles were visible under her moist skin. She pressed her skin and it bounced right back—proving that she wasn't dehydrated. Checking herself, she found out that she didn't lose any muscle or fat mass. In other words, she didn't remain unconscious for long. At most, it shouldn't have been more than two days.

However, the body condition of the people around her was very different. Faun's skin was as shriveled as a dry leaf. The skin on his face was so thin and gaunt that she could see the shape of his skull. The old Paleoindian had lost all his muscle mass. He was just skin

and bones. His dry, yellow skin was taut around his shoulder bones and leg bones. It had lost all signs of moisture. Even the last bit of fat had already disappeared from his body. This meant that they had been unconscious for more than a few months.

But, if she remembered correctly, she had only been in Red Nautilus for a few days.

"What's... going on here?" She vigorously broke apart the thick white vapor of "milk" which had gathered around her. She took a few steps forward, treading on a few people and the disgusting fleshy floor. "We entered the pocket dimension at the same time. If I'm alright, they shouldn't have become just skin and bones!"

She took a few more steps and found out that not everyone was as skinny as them. Some of the people were like herself. Their skins were still moist and they looked as though they were just sleeping. She took another few more steps and her gaze fell upon a group of bodies. She saw the glaze from a blue-white decorated porcelain vase. Lin Sanjiu pushed aside the person who was lying on that man. A few of these people looked familiar; they seemed to be members of Smiling Mermaid. After pushing the person aside, she saw Porcelain Vase's body in full view. If the other people looked bad, Lin Sanjiu felt like vomiting when she saw the state of Porcelain Vase's body under his clothes. He would have looked better if it was just his skeleton under those clothes. It was so gross that she refused to look at him and pulled down his clothes over his body once more. Staring at his grey tunic, she froze for a second.

The symbol representing the Smiling Mermaid was missing from his shirt. Porcelain Vase wasn't the only one with a missing symbol. The symbol was missing from the shirts of the rest of the members, including Faun. When she looked closely, their clothes were different from what she remembered.

"Hey! Wake up!" she nudged the young man in the Zhongshan suit quite violently. Then, she stopped immediately. Her hand felt

something scary. She was worried that if she shook him again, his bones would all break. "What's going on?!"

"Don't even try to wake them up. It's impossible," Mrs. Manas interrupted her. "I managed to wake you up only because I am part of our consciousness. I don't think anything from their outside world can reach them."

Lin Sanjiu knew that Mrs. Manas was right without even trying. She let out a long sigh, "In any case, I have to get out of here first..."

She looked up at the spot not far from her.

The wisps of "milk" had stopped pestering her for quite a few minutes. When Lin Sanjiu noticed that, she looked up and finally understood why. She couldn't help taking a deep breath.

All the "milk" floating within these flesh walls had disappeared. No, the term "disappeared" wasn't right. They had merged into a thick substance not far from Lin Sanjiu as if they had all the intention to swallow her.

She saw the mass of "milk" rushing toward her. For a moment, the white substance filled her entire vision. Lin Sanjiu quickly propped herself and stepped on a few people's bodies to jump in front of a wall not far from her.

"This must work," she mumbled and activated her [Mosaic censorship]. Flesh and biological fluids exploded under her palm. Lin Sanjiu thought she heard something screeching. Before she could react, she found herself basking in white daylight.

Chapter 304: Heading To Free District

Lin Sanjiu totally couldn't recognize where she was.

It had been some time since she had woken up. A cold breeze blew as she stood feeling somewhat at a loss. She couldn't understand what had happened. Nothing made sense to her. She tried to piece together what had happened before she entered the pocket dimension, yet it still couldn't explain why she would appear here now.

After she jumped out of the fleshy prison behind her, it started quivering like an injured animal. The milk-like white vapor poured out from the opening created by Lin Sanjiu and continued for several minutes. At first, Lin Sanjiu was very cautious about it. However, she discovered that the "milk" lost its original effects once it was exposed to the outside world, as if the air outside diluted it. They quickly dissipated into the cold breeze. When she accidentally breathed some of it, her mind felt a little light, but it didn't affect her much.

Lin Sanjiu could feel a coarse and cold rocky surface pressing against both sides of her body. It was as if the rock walls were on the verge of closing and just swallowing Lin Sanjiu. As the space between the rock walls was narrow and irregularly-shaped, Lin Sanjiu's skeletal wings really posed a large problem for her. No matter how hard she tried to adjust the angles of her wings, they would always hit the walls. It was very uncomfortable. The only wider space was actually the location where that flesh prison was situated at. It was as though someone had made a pocket between the rock walls and somehow kept a prison made of flesh right in the middle of that pocket, even leaving some space around it.

Lin Sanjiu had stopped trying to look upward. Even with her posthuman vision, the rock walls were as high as her eyes could see. White light flooded from the opening above. When she looked up for the first time, Lin Sanjiu took quite a few seconds to

recognize that she was looking at the sky from the opening far away.

Sighing, Lin Sanjiu fumbled through the two rock walls and took a few more steps forward. There was a thin layer of soil on the rocky surface which allowed a few malnourished green plants to sprout, although, just like the people in the fleshy prison, they were on the verge of dying.

Lin Sanjiu remembered clearly that she had entered a pocket dimension with the members of Smiling Mermaid. However, she had no idea how she ended up waking in a fleshy cavity, right at the bottom of a deep ravine.

After the fleshy cavity had been destroyed, slippery fluids poured out from it. Every time Lin Sanjiu took a step, she could hear the squelchy sounds that her boots made. Under the dim daylight from above, the gruesome deep-red walls of the fleshy cavity gradually dried up and became dark brown, as if it was near death. Regardless of what that thing was, Lin Sanjiu's attack had killed it.

Carrying the people out from that fleshy prison was harder than she thought. Though a few people looked healthy, most of them were emaciated as they had been in a coma for a long time without any form of nutrition. When Lin Sanjiu tried to carry a girl, she accidentally moved the girl's thigh. She heard a crack. The girl's leg bone was dislocated. It slipped from her pelvis bone leaving only a thin layer of yellow skin holding her leg to her body.

Perhaps, after the "milk" had evaporated into the air, these people would slowly wake up, but Lin Sanjiu didn't plan to wait for them to wake up. She placed the 30 to 40 people she rescued on the ground outside the prison. After doing that, she found some water from her card deck and fed some to each person. Afterward, she stepped across the small spaces between each of the unconscious people like a ballerina and headed further into the narrow rocky ravine with some effort.

After walking for two hours in the direction where the light seemed brighter and where the path seemed to lead upslope, Lin Sanjiu reached a dead end. No matter how reluctant she was, the only way out seemed to be to take the harsher and darker path in front of her which seemed just to get narrower and narrower.

Of all the "routes" Lin Sanjiu had journeyed through, this was certainly the most torturous. A few thousand meters below sea level, a large fissure somehow appeared in the rock stratum, creating a small tiny crack. Lin Sanjiu didn't know how long she had been walking and struggling to move forward through this harrowingly narrow space which was certainly tight enough to make someone claustrophobic.

In the beginning, she was still feeling puzzled and a little worried about her situation. However, after walking for some time, the only thing that occupied her mind was her intense hatred for her pair of skeletal wings. A few knocks and scrapes were nothing, but there were parts of the path so narrow that it was almost impossible for her large skeletal wings to pass through. Lin Sanjiu had to grit her teeth and endure the pain of stretching out her wings length-wise, which had the same effect as forcefully bending one of her four limbs into an impossible angle. Sometimes, she even had to sort of stack her wings together. Lin Sanjiu really did not know how she squeezed through those portions. Luckily, no one could hear her screams of pain in this deep ravine.

Just when she thought that she would just personally tear off her own wings and throw them away. The rock walls receded and gradually the gap between the rock walls grew wider. Soon, the path became brighter and wider. The gradient of the path also started to increase. Lin Sanjiu climbed for a few hours using both her arms and feet. Finally, she found herself on the surface level again.

When a cacophony of humans voices, the engine sounds from the occasional airship flying across the sky, some loud noises

generated by something unknown, and the other countless noises and sounds entered her ears, Lin Sanjiu almost suspected for a second that she had crawled out from hell and returned to the human world.

Two large massive moons hung over countless poorly maintained hundred-stories skyscrapers. The haphazard layers of power lines blocked their full view. The noise of the bustling city filled every lit street and dim corner.

Lin Sanjiu seemed to still be in the Cyber District.

Despite the large big fissure, the people seemed unfazed that there was an abyss right in the middle of their road. They treated it as something very common. The spot where Lin Sanjiu climbed up from was only surrounded by a yellow barricade tape which warned people about the potential fall. When she came out from, she was bleeding from the many scrapes she gotten from the sharp edges of the rocks. Her face and limbs were covered with dust and soil and her whole body ached. Yet, no one even gave her a second look.

Enduring her aches, Lin Sanjiu took out her map.

"This is strange? How did you get back here?" Mrs. Manas commented from Lin Sanjiu's mind after looking at the map for some time.

Even though she was unfamiliar with Red Nautilus, she managed to figure out where she was very quickly. This long ravine which spanned across more than half the Cyber District was named "Grand Canyon". It was like a scar on the map. One side of the Grand Canyon was just wastelands, while Lin Sanjiu was on the side which was near the business center. The first time she saw this Grand Canyon was actually from the window of that dead appraiser's house.

However, there was a large distance between Smiling Mermaid's base and this Grand Canyon. Lin Sanjiu couldn't figure out how

she could end up at the bottom of this Grand Canyon. After losing [A Girl's Sorrow], Lin Sanjiu couldn't explain the series of subsequent events logically.

Irritated, Lin Sanjiu rubbed her map once but quickly stopped because she remembered the number of red crystals she spent on it. "I don't know," she replied moodily, "But, the people, or whatever, which put me in this situation should count their lucky stars today. I'm going to buy an airship ticket now."

Even though Lin Sanjiu was kind, she wasn't stupid. When a dozen medium crystals fell from one of the people whom she was carrying from the fleshy prison, Lin Sanjiu knew that she had solved her airship ticket problem.

Although she got the money for her ticket in an integrity-compromised manner, Mrs. Manas, who usually had a higher moral bar, condoned her action. After all, the most important resources to those comatose people might be food and water rather than red crystals.

"But... Are you just going to ignore the pocket dimension that is swallowing up Red Nautilus?" Mrs. Manas wasn't as forgiving about this issue.

"I can't handle that," Lin Sanjiu admitted, "But, where is that pocket dimension?"

"Obviously, you know, it's at Smiling Mermaid's—"

"Logically speaking, I should be standing in Smiling Mermaid's base," Lin Sanjiu interrupted Mrs. Manas, "But, I woke up here."

Mrs. Manas kept quiet for a while before whispering, "Is it possible that the pocket dimension had already swallowed up this area?"

"It doesn't look any different than before."

"But, Sajee said—" Mrs. Manas was a little stunned. She stopped before she finished her sentence.

Lin Sanjiu smiled humorlessly, "That's right. It is all Sajee's one-sided words. We entered the pocket dimension with her but I didn't see her anywhere in that prison."

The strange-looking girl definitely hid something from Lin Sanjiu and the others.

"When I meet Reno and the others, I will get help from the Progressor Alliance to investigate Sajee," Lin Sanjiu mumbled to herself quietly as she walked toward the airship registration point, "Before I find that woman, I can only hope that the elites in Red Nautilus are smart enough not to let things escalate out of control."

Lin Sanjiu thought that it was a decent plan until she entered the busy airship registration point and stood before the information screen for a long time. She clearly remembered that Smiling Mermaid had already received information about the "parasitic" expanding pocket dimension. However, when she read the news, "Cyber Current Affairs", on the information screen, she didn't see any coverage about that matter. There was only news like "CLASH had successfully returned from an A-level world", "12 new apocalyptic worlds had been entered into the Central Information System, "Someone is offering to buy plant-related Special Items at high prices".

"What's going on..." Lin Sanjiu frowned but she couldn't come up with an answer. She shook her head and walked toward the ticket counter, joining the moving crowd.

After the tall woman with skeletal wings left, the young ticket counter representative looked down at her electronic information screen and started browsing the bidding prices for visas available for four months later. For the D-level world that she was targeting, the price she bid was indeed too low. Just when she was about to sigh and ponder about what she could do next, she sensed that someone was standing in front of the ticket counter.

"Hello," the young representative looked up and flashed her

business smile, following which, she found her words stuck in her throat.

The woman standing in front of her had eyes like two deep soulless wells and had no sclera. Even though she had seen many different people with all sort of strange appearances and conditions, this woman had a sort of unique, non-human vibe. The young customer representative shuddered unintentionally.

The woman who was wearing a thick scarf seemed to realize her own abnormality. She looked at her reflection in the silver counter desk before looking up again. This time, her sclera suddenly appeared. It was as if she had tried her best to compress her pupils to create some sclera. She blinked vigorously before smiling.

"Where is that Big Sister with skeletal wings heading? I want a ticket to the same place."

Chapter 305: Area R

When Lin Sanjiu stepped through the doors of A-17 berth's lounge, she saw a long walkway made of many small pebbles and painted yellow. The walkway felt bumpy and it made people worried if they would just slip on one of those pebbles and fall from a few hundred meters. After all, there wasn't any sort of safety handrail on the two sides of the walkway. Looking down from the walkway, Lin Sanjiu could see the pedestrians on the ground. They looked like black ants walking slowly.

At this height, one could see the mid-section of the skyscrapers which loomed over the Cyber District. Light streamed out from the windows of the grayish-black buildings which seemed to reach into the night sky... as if they would just continue upward without an end. Lin Sanjiu couldn't help wondering what sort of people would actually live at the top of these buildings.

There were two rows of small guiding light at both sides of the walkway. The small white light only lit the walkway and disappeared after a few hundred meters as if they were swallowed by the darkness at the end of the walkway. A large floating monstrous vehicle was the airship she was going to board. Lin Sanjiu stopped and took a few steps backward. She tilted her head and observed the "airship".

As a person from Earth, the appearance of this airship, as well as the various man-made infrastructures in Red Nautilus, was beyond her imagination. If she didn't know what this thing was beforehand, there was no way Lin Sanjiu would even associate it with a transportation vehicle.

Looking from a distance, the steel upper deck of the airship was at least a several hectares wide. It was as if someone had plucked up a town square and planted it in mid-air. Just as she thought of this, she suddenly heard soft footsteps behind her. Before the person behind hurried her to move, she picked up her pace and

walked toward the airship.

The walkway was too narrow for two passengers to stand shoulder-to-shoulder. It was almost like walking a balancing beam at high altitude. Lin Sanjiu stopped looking and quickly entered the area below the steel deck.

Lin Sanjiu had no idea where the main body of the airship was or what it looked like. Other than the large upper deck, she could only see this extremely large "container" which hung from the belly of the airship. It was a metallic container sealed with layers of steel. Up close, she couldn't even see the edges of the container. White light seeped from the gap between one of the steel layers. Just as she reached the entrance, an exhausted-looking young man in a work uniform shouted at her without even looking up, "Area R is on your left. It is just an empty space. The door is opened so just find a spot and sit down."

Lin Sanjiu wanted to pretend as though she was an experienced traveler. She entered the airship without saying a word. But, inevitably, she got into a bit of a trouble with her skeletal wings. When she bent forward, she did not control the sharp spines at the tip of her wings properly so she nearly sliced the young man's face in half. Thankfully, she managed to board the airship without hurting anyone.

The young man stared at her from behind, and his face was pale. Then, he suddenly shouted as if he had forgotten something, "Be careful! If you damage our goods, you'll have to pay for them!"

By then, Lin Sanjiu had already walked to the door of Area R. When she heard his warning, she sighed silently.

"No one told you to buy the cheapest ticket," Mrs. Manas mumbled.

After quietly cursing her skeletal wings another time, she tucked them tightly behind her back and squeezed through the door of Area R cautiously. Area R was filled with steel good containers.

They were arranged so that they occupied every inch of space all the way to the ceiling. Area R was dimly lit as there were only fluorescent lights hanging above the corridors.

Sometimes, after all the cargo had been moved into the airship, there would be some empty space in Area R. The tickets for a spot in Area R were half the price of a normal ticket. However, no food and drinks were provided onboard with this ticket and there weren't any proper seats. Sometimes, these passengers couldn't even stretch their legs so they can also lean against the goods container. When Lin Sanjiu spotted this ticket, she was pleasantly surprised but now she couldn't help feeling some regret.

At most, Area R was only about 30 square meters. It was extremely small compared to the size of the entire airship. Yet, the transportation provider wouldn't even miss out on earning money from this small space. Lin Sanjiu didn't know if she should consider herself lucky. When she entered the space, she saw around five people sitting in a corner. When they spotted her wings, almost all of them showed an unwelcoming expression.

Despite that, Lin Sanjiu shamelessly found a spot. She stood with her arms crossed. Even though she took up quite a large space, no one said anything in the end. Perhaps, it was because she looked very fierce when she showed a stoic, expressionless face.

The person who had been walking behind her entered Area R with footsteps of the same frequency and volume. A young woman stepped through the entrance head first. When Lin Sanjiu looked up subconsciously, she was shocked. Before she let out a gasp, she quickly stopped herself. Shocked, she watched as the woman walked in, looked around, and finally sat down in front of her.

At first glance, Lin Sanjiu almost mistook that woman for Sajee. However, when she looked carefully, the woman's appearance was completely different from Sajee. It was apparent from the woman's hair color, features, height, and frame that they were two very different people. Lin Sanjiu nearly mistook that woman as Sajee

only because that woman had similar eyes. It was as if her pupils were going to consume her whole eyes and she was wearing a thick scarf around her neck.

The stranger's lip curled slightly as though she had noticed Lin Sanjiu's gaze. Despite her astonishment, Lin Sanjiu did not show any hints of her emotions on her face. She maintained the same expressionless face.

Since it was just a 30 square meters space, the transport provider couldn't sell that many tickets anyway. When the tenth person walked into Area R, the young exhausted ship crew also walked to the entrance of Area R.

"Hey everybody. Listen up. This portion of the journey will last five days. You will have to alight when we reach the harbor and board another airship," he said absent-mindedly as he supported himself against the door frame with one hand, "If you follow the corridor to the end, you will find the toilet. Before we fly, the entrance where you had entered from would be locked. You can move around along the corridors but you better stay within Area R. Oh, it doesn't really matter, but you guys won't be able to access the cargo area. Don't touch our things and don't fight. Otherwise, we have people who will throw you off our ship."

He didn't even bother to look at the passengers' reaction. After he uttered the last word, he turned and walked away. Not long after, they heard a click sound of a metal mechanism as the entrance into the airship was shut.

The ten strangers stuck in a small space tried to maintain the same distance between each other. Area R fell silent. This silence was quickly drowned by the rumbling from the airship's engine. Though the metallic airship looked sturdy, it didn't seem very stable when it was taking off. The entire body of the airship vibrated for quite a while. When the airship finally stabilized and started gliding smoothly, the passengers shifted and tried to look for a more comfortable spot. Some of them sat cross-legged and

others sat with their legs outstretched. A middle-aged brunette walked past Lin Sanjiu and entered the corridor, leaving Area R.

Lin Sanjiu finally found some time to speak with Mrs. Manas and raise her doubts.

"Was I dreaming then? Or is that just an illusion?" Lin Sanjiu still felt a little confused when she recalled that realistic world she was in. "It's too realistic. If it weren't for those suspicious signs, it would seem like a completely different reality... In comparison, this strange airship, Red Nautilus or whatever is more like a dream."

"I'm not sure either..." Mrs. Manas replied, "This is my first time encountering such a situation too. But, when you saw Zhu Mei's eyes and those blue banknotes... They were all done by me. I couldn't wake you up so I created some imagery within their dream... If I didn't do that, I guess you'd be back in your hometown leading a normal, average life."

Shocked by this revelation, Lin Sanjiu shuddered. "So that's the reason! The others must be entrapped by their illusions so they just won't wake up..."

If she didn't have Mrs. Manas, Lin Sanjiu knew that she would end up in the same fate as the others in a few months' time, lying with the others in a near-death state.

"How did you discover that something was wrong?" she asked in her mind. Lin Sanjiu's expression was as unchanging as ever. She looked as though she was just resting rather than conversing with someone.

"You can consider yourself lucky," Mrs. Manas's tone relaxed a little. "The white vapor made you think of your old hometown and past life so it was normal for you. In the beginning, I was confused so I thought I was you. After staying in your body for so many days... But, quickly, I realized that we had two separate consciousness. You seemed oblivious to my presence. That's why I

woke up first and discovered my own existence. This was how I realized that something was wrong."

Although it was a little difficult to comprehend, Lin Sanjiu did experience the same frightening alternate reality so she quickly understood. At the same time, she couldn't help feeling a little scared, thinking about it in retrospect.

"You're right. If I didn't dream about my previous life, but about the apocalyptic worlds... Fighting, surviving and finding visas... neither of us would even notice anything wrong. If that was the case, I would just continue sleeping..."

Her own words stunned her. A fleeting thought struck her like a lightning bolt and her face slowly turned pale.

"You mean..." Mrs. Manas stammered.

"Was I really awake before I dreamed about my hometown and my past life?" Lin Sanjiu questioned herself inwardly—almost as if she was trying to force herself to find that answer.

Chapter 306: One Missing Person

This five-day journey was harder to endure than Lin Sanjiu had imagined.

Even though food and water were not provided, that wasn't much of a hassle as she still had food she had stored from the previous worlds. Though they didn't taste good, they were good enough to sustain her. She could even tolerate that dirty, rudimentary toilet constructed from galvanized iron sheet. The things which irritated Lin Sanjiu and made the ride very uncomfortable were how confined Area R was, the fact that she couldn't see the sunlight in this cargo hold, her aching muscles because she didn't have the space to sit down and rest properly, and on top of all that, a thought that she was forcing herself not to think about.

If she started suspecting that everything was a dream before, how could she prove that she was not in another dream? If she followed this logic, the whole situation with the apocalyptic worlds could just be a hallucination and she might be sitting in a mental institute right now. Lin Sanjiu couldn't allow herself to entertain this thought and edge toward insanity.

No matter what had happened in the pocket dimension, she only needed to know one thing: she had already escaped.

However, each time her gaze landed on the woman sitting in front of her, she would find very difficult to maintain her train of thought. After three days of traveling, the passengers were better acquainted with each other and had exchanged some information. The woman whom Lin Sanjiu mistook as Sajee said that her name was AYU when she stood up and left Area R on the first day. As people from various apocalyptic worlds gathered at Red Nautilus, there were all sorts of strange names here.

Apart from her eyes, the woman looked like a very normal

posthuman. Over the few days, her eyes had also gradually become normal. Her pupils had shrunk to a normal size showing her sclera properly. Other than her scarf, she shared no resemblance to Sajee. In fact, even her scarf was a different color.

"You can go out and stretch yourself now," a person said and smiled, and Lin Sanjiu as he stepped through the door of Area R. "There isn't anyone in the restroom area."

The voice belonged to a teenage boy. Though his dirty blond hair wasn't that eye-catching, it occasionally reminded Lin Sanjiu of Silvan. However, under that blonde hair was an average face with a few freckles. He had copper-colored skin and his teeth were very white though it was not exceptionally neat. Over the few days, Lin Sanjiu became familiar with Walter first, so compared to the other passengers, he was a little more like a friend.

"Thank you," Lin Sanjiu smiled and walked out of R Area.

Even though the corridor wasn't wide, it allowed Lin Sanjiu to fully extend her wings when she stood sideways. Just like her other limbs, they ached when she retracted them for too long, even though they were made of bones.

With a soft sweeping sound, the skeletal wings broke through the air. In a blink of an eye, the sharp tips of her wings had brushed past the lock on the airship entrance. Even though Lin Sanjiu's skeletal wings looked very heavy, they were surprisingly nimble. Their almost incomprehensible speed could very well slice open a person if they were not paying attention. As a result, Walter would always help Lin Sanjiu check if there were people in the corridor beforehand.

Lin Sanjiu stretched her back and sighed inwardly, "Ever since I came to Red Nautilus, I have almost forgotten the meaning of spaciousness."

Mrs. Manas did not reply, as she didn't reply to every single aimless random comment that Lin Sanjiu made. However, she was

more quiet than usual in the recent few days. Lin Sanjiu didn't expect a response and continued, "I wish I could bathe... This stench is really seeping into my skin."

When Lin Sanjiu first boarded the airship, this particular stench wasn't that obvious. Ignoring its source, this smell had been growing stronger and stronger over the few days. It smelled like pigskin. It didn't have a distinctive bad smell but it wasn't a pleasant one either. Lin Sanjiu found the smell very weird but she had the feeling that she had smelled it once before.

The cargo hold at the sides of Area R was occupied fully by shipping containers. There wasn't even a single gap between them. Looking down the corridor, Lin Sanjiu could see the shadow of the half-opened door of the toilet at the end. The door swayed slightly while the airship moved.

Lin Sanjiu had enough of this boring and restrictive environment. However, the airship would only land at least two days later. She sighed softly and retracted her wings before entering Area R again. Even though they would frequently have passengers in the cargo hold, no one thought to add a window, therefore the only source of light was from the row of fluorescent light. The white light pouring down from above had to overcome various layers of obstacles before they finally reach Area R, by then, the light was just very dim.

Perhaps, because of the poor lighting, the passengers in Area R only noticed that something was amiss half an hour after Lin Sanjiu had returned. The lady sitting near the entrance was the first person who noticed that something was wrong. Her messy brown hair draped over her shoulders. A smile rarely graced her slim, long face. She only smiled when she talked about her daughter but never for long.

"Eight, nine," her voice sounded clearly in the silence, "Huh?"

The brunette woman's surprised tone immediately drew the

attention of the other passengers. Following which, everyone scanned the Area R and some passengers started frowning.

There were only nine people in Area R, which was 30 square meters max. The brunette woman turned to Lin Sanjiu and asked, "After you came back, did anyone else walked out?"

Lin Sanjiu would only open her wings in the corridor when there wasn't anyone in the corridor. After a few days, everyone already knew of this habit.

"No." Lin Sanjiu looked at Area R's entrance once more. Rather than a real entrance, it was more like a space between the metal cargo shelves. "At least, I didn't notice."

"Who's missing? That person must have gone to the toilet earlier," another man spoke and seemed unfazed by the matter. He wore a striped shirt and the stripes curved around his large belly. Some of the buttons on his shirt seemed like they would just burst open any time yet they struggled to hold his shirt together.

"I think it's..." Walter thought for a moment, "the person isn't that tall. I have forgotten his name... But, I was the last person who came out of the toilet. There isn't anyone there."

After he said that, Lin Sanjiu remembered the man. He was a middle-built, average-looking man. It was hard to tell his age and he barely left an impression. As no one had any translation device and he only spoke a very obscure language, no one knew his name.

However, they did not need to worry about him getting lost in this cage-like environment. Consequently, even though Walter emphasized that there was nobody outside, no one took the matter to heart. "Maybe, he entered the cargo hold," an older, tall, burly man chuckled, revealing a crafty expression which contrasted with his appearance. "I think if he wants to earn back some of that ticket money, it isn't our business. We better not interfere."

These passengers were basically strangers to each other.

Naturally, the best course of action was not to interfere with each other.

However, Walter wasn't fully convinced. He narrowed eyes and looked out at the corridor and at Area R once more. In the end, he didn't say a word.

Without any sunlight in Area R, no one could tell the time without looking at the watch. From the movement of people in and out of Area R, probably a few more hours had passed before Walter walked quietly to Lin Sanjiu's side. The young man with copper skin smiled at Lin Sanju, "Why don't we go out and have a little walk?"

Lin Sanjiu remembered his previous expression and nodded. Then, she followed him into the corridor.

The metal floor beneath them was very sturdy so it was hard to imagine that they were thousands of meters in the air.

"My hometown is a very beautiful place," Walter suddenly spoke after they stood quietly in the corridor for some time. "Humans lived on various platforms that spread across the ocean. You would see seawater all around you. The color of the water changes according to the sky, it might be emerald green or golden blue. Even though life there was rather monotonous, it was very beautiful."

Lin Sanjiu listened quietly. She did not know he would suddenly bring up this topic.

"However, when the apocalypse came, the world beneath our platforms changed." His distant memories came over him like a breeze of wind and Walter paused. "Even though I have already been through five worlds, the creatures living beneath the surface of the water there were the largest living thing I have ever seen. If I didn't witness a water platform being attacked, I wouldn't even know their true appearance."

"To make matters worse, there wasn't only just that massive creature. There were also countless underwater lifeforms that we had never seen before. They came from nowhere. No matter where we moved our platforms, we kept colliding with these creatures. Everything happened too quickly. At that time, my parents and younger sister were on the other side of the world. They were on vacation. Isn't it funny? They were still on the ocean. Was it worth traveling to see a few plants which had sprouted..."

Even though that had happened so long ago, Walter looked like he was about to cry and smile at the same time.

"In the end, a white creature suddenly rose in front of the water platform they were on. It dragged the whole platform underwater. I still remember watching the video of it. Many bubbles floated to the surface of the water before the video turned black. After that, I gained my first ability. It was also an ability that was critical for survival in my hometown."

Lin Sanjiu felt somewhat glad that she didn't have to witness her parents dying in front of her. She sensed that Walter was touching on the main point of his conversation soon, so she couldn't help holding her breath. He wouldn't tell her his ability for no reason.

"Life Detection." Walter suddenly whispered. Lin Sanjiu could barely hear him even though she was standing just beside him.

"Right now, there are only nine life forms in this cargo hold."

Chapter 307: Too Many...

"That person has been killed!"

That was Lin Sanjiu's first reaction. She suppressed her shock and looked behind her, at Area R. Seeing that no one was coming out, she quickly asked, "Can you detect where the dead body is? Strange... Who is it? What is his or her motivation to kill?"

Naturally, Walter did not know the answer. He could only detect living life forms within a certain area as well as their size.

"Maybe, the murderer had already stuffed the body into the cargo area?" the teenager looked at the stacked cargo on both sides of the corridor but he didn't see any bloodstain he expected to find. After thinking for a while, Walter suggested, "I think it might be a personal grudge."

"Hopefully, that's the reason," Lin Sanjiu said as she activated her higher consciousness scan. Unfortunately, she didn't find anything. "After that person had his revenge, I think he'll stop."

"Yeah, it'll be fine even if it is for his personal agenda..." Walter agreed. When they walked back to Area R, neither of them showed any signs of having that discussion.

When Lin Sanjiu stood at her corner once more, she couldn't help observing everyone again, just like the first time she saw them. The disappearance of the nameless man did not seem to have any effect on the other passengers here. It did not seem to bother the fat man who was constantly scratching himself, AYU who often stood up to stretch her joints, and the brown-haired woman who was just staring at the ceiling. Everyone looked the same as before.

"Nine life forms..." When these three words appeared in her head, a shadow of someone coming close to her interrupted her thoughts.

"How old is he?" The person who spoke sounded like she was full

of hot air. Lin Sanjiu let out a long sigh. Out of all the passengers, the person was someone that Lin Sanjiu didn't know how to deal with. The woman had a round face and curly, fine hair which made her look older than her actual age. Even though that woman had already survived two apocalyptic worlds, the rotund figure under her green dress was still very obvious. "I think you're a bit taller than him? And you're older too, right?"

As the woman spoke, she threw a few glances at Walter. Even though she didn't state the obvious, her telltale smile was more than enough to give Lin Sanjiu a headache. She lowered her head and looked at Green Dress coldly. She learned from her experience over the past two days that this was the best method to deal with this woman, "What do you want?"

When Lin Sanjiu was expressionless, her light amber eyes made her look like a white tiger eyeing its prey.

However, the said prey in this situation seemed a little slow.

Green Dress shook her hands and the fats on the back of her hands quivered. "Ah, I'm just asking. Isn't it boring just sitting around? We are both women, so, we can discuss some common topics."

There were only four women (including Lin Sanjiu) among the ten passengers. However, Lin Sanjiu had never seen Green Dress speaking to AYU. Of course, Lin Sanjiu wasn't going to voice her curiosity about the matter anytime soon. She knew that if she asked the woman this question, that woman would just prattle on for a long time without giving a proper answer.

"I don't like to talk," Lin Sanjiu answered curtly.

"Oh my, you don't have to be shy in front of me," the woman continued undeterred and seemed unaware of Lin Sanjiu's disdain. "You were speaking to that young man, Wal-something? Weren't you chatting and whispering to him for a long time? Hey, but I wasn't eavesdropping, I'm not that sort of person..."

Even though the woman's indirect probing of Lin Sanjiu's privacy was very irritating, Lin Sanjiu felt, perhaps intuitively, that Green Dress had nothing to do with the nameless man's murder. Perhaps, the woman had not experienced that many New Worlds, so she still had a gossipy nature and enjoyed gossiping. It was very annoying but it wasn't any sort of big crime to humanity.

"What we discuss is," just when Lin Sanjiu started talking, she noticed the tall, burly man walking over, so she immediately stopped. When the tall, burly man walked past her, he smiled at her as usual—he would always smile around women. After he walked out of Area R, Lin Sanjiu continued, "none of your concern."

From the interactions with Green Dress over the two days, Lin Sanjiu could tell that she wasn't ill-natured, so when Lin Sanjiu spoke again, she gave the woman some sincere advice.

"I don't know how you survived in the past, but in the future New Worlds that you go to, you better control yourself." Lin Sanjiu was being intentionally blunt. As expected, Green Dress's face turned red. "Among all the people that I've met, do you know how many people would just kill you because they find you irritating? It is definitely more than you can imagine. You should count yourself lucky that for me killing humans isn't like killing pigs... However, there are many people who don't recognize this difference."

The woman who actually stood very close to Lin Sanjiu shifted some distance away from her hesitantly. After a while, Lin Sanjiu didn't know what Green Dress mumbled before finally leaving.

Area R remained silent for the next couple of hours. According to the fat man, it was already nighttime. Everyone closed their eyes and tried to sleep for a bit, even though to them, there wasn't any difference between day and night in Area R.

Seeing that the others weren't moving for some time, as if they were all asleep, Walter walked over to Lin Sanjiu's side quietly.

Actually, they had the same height but that did not appear the case because Lin Sanjiu was slimmer. Walter's expression looked a little unnatural when he grumbled to her, "She's really annoying."

When Green Dress spoke to Lin Sanjiu before, the volume of her voice wasn't that soft.

Under the dim light, Lin Sanjiu smiled. After a while, she said, "She isn't bad. Besides, her antics benefit us."

"How so?" When Walter turned his head, his dark blonde hair shimmered a little, and it reminded Lin Sanjiu of Silvan's golden hair which glimmered like sun rays.

"As a pair of lovers," she covered her mouth so that only a little of her voice slipped through her fingers, "would look more convincing than two acquaintants speaking... No matter what goal 'that friend' has in mind, I think he would be more mindful and not bother us."

Walter let out a laugh, "You're right. But, let me say this first, I don't agree to any sort of intimate actions between us."

Lin Sanjiu gave him a "you-think-too-much" expression.

As the two of them stood together and chatted softly in a quiet corner, it strengthened Green Dress' impression of them as a couple. When they realized that, they couldn't help laughing.

Before the smiles faded from their faces, they heard someone's quiet footsteps in the corridor.

Walter immediately scrunched his nose as if he had smelled something, "He finally returned! Remind me not to go to the toilet for the next few hours..."

The tall, burly man went out for such a long time that Lin Sanjiu almost thought that he had been murdered, if not for the fact that no one else went out after him.

Just when Lin Sanjiu wanted to say something, she suddenly

noticed something was amiss when she cast a cursory glance at the corridor. However, she couldn't specifically point out what made her feel uneasy. When she looked up again, Walter had instantly turned pale because of shock. Lin Sanjiu immediately turned around.

The something that was amiss was the shadow she saw in the corridor.

The height of the owner of that shadow only reached Lin Sanjiu's shoulder. Compared to the tall, burly man that should return, this man was too small.

The nameless man suddenly appeared after missing for eight hours in this sealed airship hold, acting as if nothing had happened. Lin Sanjiu and Walter watched flabbergasted as the man walked into Area R and searched for an empty spot to sleep, minding his own business. After that, Lin Sanjiu opened her mouth hesitantly and whispered.

"Does he have some sort of ability? Or, Special Item which can create another space... So, your ability couldn't detect him?"

Before Lin Sanjiu could finish the last half of her sentence, Walter suddenly ran into the corridor. Lin Sanjiu didn't know what the problem was, she just followed tightly behind Walter.

The door of the toilet at the end of the corridor was open. The shadow of the door swayed slightly with the movements of the airship. The cargo hold at both sides of the corridor was still tightly shut.

"You don't have to go over," Walter reached out and held Lin Sanjiu's arm, "there's no one in the toilet."

When Lin Sanjiu heard when Walter said, she almost couldn't comprehend his words, "No one?"

"There are still nine lifeforms on this airship—"

"Then, what about that tall, burly man?" Lin Sanjiu tilted her

head in confusion. She was just about to question Walter if he had made a mistake with his detection ability when he saw his expression suddenly relaxing. He gave a long sigh, "Ahh... It's alright now. I detect ten living life forms again."

"Maybe, it's just like you suggested. That man probably has a space to hide himself or something like that," Walter wiped his face. When his hand was by his side again, he had a relieved smile on his face, "Look, we made ourselves so paranoid this whole time!"

After heaving a sigh of relief, Lin Sanjiu didn't know whether to laugh or cry at their reaction. She agreed that they were being overly paranoid. "Alright, it's okay now. You should go back and rest now. Next time, I wouldn't care even if someone makes a hole and jump out of this airship..."

However, when they reached the entrance of Area R, she stopped. She didn't hear a set of footsteps following her. For a moment, she nearly thought that Walter had disappeared. Thankfully, when she turned around, Walter was still standing in the same spot.

His face was white as if he had been so stunned that he didn't know what to do. He was muttering. Lin Sanjiu only heard what he said when she walked closer.

"12, 13, 14, 15..."

They were more than ten thousand meters above the ground, in a sealed airship.

Chapter 308: The Mother Hen And The Pregnant Lady

The pale dim light shone lifelessly from above at the isolated, sealed empty space. The airship had entered a stretch of turbulent air pocket half an hour ago. Every time there was turbulence, the passengers who were fast asleep would wake up as if someone had shaken them awake.

Even though Lin Sanjiu was tired, she didn't feel the faintest bit of drowsiness. She didn't dare to close her eyes.

Three days ago, ten people had boarded this airship. Right now, she was surrounded by 16 lifeforms.

Apart from herself, eight people among these 16 supposedly humans were Area R's passengers. Other than the missing tall, burly man, most of the remaining passengers were fast asleep. Their bodies moved as the airship trembled. Due to their ignorance regarding the matter, they all seemed to be sleeping peacefully. Walter, who was sitting opposite from Lin Sanjiu, was staring at his own hand with an uneasy expression. He had been in that position for quite some time as if the world's largest mystery was in his hands.

Lin Sanjiu sighed lightly; her head was starting to hurt a little.

The first passive skill that a posthuman developed in an apocalyptic world was usually a crucial survival ability corresponding to the world they were in, hence, Walter's [Life Detection] was definitely accurate. Just like Lin Sanjiu's "Heat Resistance Adaptation", it was constantly in active mode.

However, when Walter detected 17 lifeforms, they had already checked the corridor, the toilet, and Area R very thoroughly. They did not spot anybody other than the passengers who boarded the airship with them. They couldn't even find the tall, burly man.

"Could they be in the cargo hold?" Walter asked with some despair as he searched the toilet once more.

Lin Sanjiu had thought of this possibility. However, even if there were some living creatures being transported by the airship in the cargo hold, that could not explain why Walter had not detected them earlier.

"You mentioned that you can also detect the size of the lifeforms," before Lin Sanjiu entered Area R again, she asked Walter hopefully. "If that is the case, can you judge what they are based on their size?"

However, she was disappointed by Walter's answer.

"As you know, the main purpose of my ability is to detect sea monsters which pose a threat to humans. It is not as sensitive when detecting other types of lifeforms..." the teenager with dark blonde hair shook his head. He massaged the middle of his brows and continued, "Right now, I only know that these lifeforms are smaller than those sea monsters and larger than mosquitoes."

His answer made no difference at all. In the end, Lin Sanjiu had to give up, perplexed. Lin Sanjiu personally suspected Walter but she couldn't think of any reasons for Walter to lie. On top of that, two people consecutively disappeared from Area R. That was an undeniable fact.

"Why don't you sleep for a while first," Walter suddenly looked up from his hand. "I will monitor the situation... We can take turns to rest."

There was still 40 hours to the estimated landing time so they had to conserve their energy to stay alert to handle any contingencies. Lin Sanjiu nodded. After having her wings for two weeks, she had learned some tricks to deal with them. She retracted her wings inward before shifting them upward. With that, she could sit down cross-legged. Even though she still was wary about sleeping, she forced herself to close her eyes. She was

more tired than she expected.

After climbing out from the ravine, Lin Sanjiu had not closed her eyes. Subsequently, she found her consciousness slowly become foggy despite the strange situation she was in. Her sleep wasn't particularly deep and it didn't feel long. Yet, when the voices of other passengers woke her up, Lin Sanjiu was surprised to find that she had already slept for five whole hours. The other passengers had also woken up. People started moving in and out of Area R. The corridor sounded crowded. There were people chatting. Some people were eating the food they brought with them and others were just stretching...

When Walter saw that she had woken up, he shook his head and whispered, "Nothing happened."

"Why don't you rest for a while?" Lin Sanjiu couldn't help feeling a little embarrassed after sleeping for such a long time, "I'll keep a look out for things."

"I'm okay. I'm not tired yet." After Walter said that, he suddenly became hesitant. "Well... I would like to go to the toilet."

Lin Sanjiu quickly understood what he didn't say. After two people had disappeared, the toilet seemed rather out of the ordinary. Lin Sanjiu immediately stood up, "I can stand guard outside. If something happens, just shout for me and I'll hear you."

"I don't think... it's appropriate?" Walter seemed to be in a dilemma, "I will just be more careful. Besides, we already checked the interior of the toilet..."

However, Lin Sanjiu didn't want anything to happen to the only ally she had on this airship. To be honest, the last time she felt any difference between genders was before the apocalypse in her world. "You don't have to be embarrassed about it. I'm not entering the toilet with you. Let's go!"

When Walter opened the door and entered the toilet, he felt so

awkward that he could nearly cry.

To make him feel a little better, Lin Sanjiu took a few steps away from the toilet and stood in the corridor, folding her arms.

Most of the passengers were in the corridor, most probably because they all found being in Area R extremely restrictive and uncomfortable. A fat man was standing not far from Lin Sanjiu. He was munching on a weird food and the chewing noises he made were very loud. AYU, with her hair on her scarf, was talking to another dark-skinned man and her back was facing Lin Sanjiu. Not far from them, the brown-haired woman stood alone. After some time, she walked away as if she had found nothing interesting in the corridor.

Green Dress, who had just walked out from Area R, walked past the brown-haired woman, brushing against her shoulder. Green Dress looked around the corridor with an uneasy gaze, without thinking twice, she walked toward Lin Sanjiu.

"I didn't mince my words when I told her off..." Lin Sanjiu was sighing silently to herself when she suddenly noticed a detail she had previously missed.

AYU, who had been smiling and chatting with another person, saw Green Dress with the corner of her eyes. She shifted slightly so that she was facing Green Dress and was about to greet the woman with her hand raised.

However, Green Dress stepped backward in a fully focused manner. Her tubby body slipped past AYU with incredible agility. She moved so fast that she had already walked away from AYU before the latter could even call her.

Acting as if she didn't notice AYU, Green Dress strutted more quickly toward Lin Sanjiu. When Green Dress stopped, Lin Sanjiu was almost certain that she saw a hint of nervousness disappearing from her face.

"Is there someone in the toilet?" Green Dress stretched her head and eyed the toilet door while she stated the obvious once again.

This time, she didn't try to strike up a random conversation because Lin Sanjiu was not about to chase her away.

"Which world are you from?" Lin Sanjiu asked, sounding a bit more amiable. She tilted her head and observed Green Dress from head to toe.

Green Dress was shocked. Apparently, she was not used to Lin Sanjiu's changed attitude, "Oh. Oh. You might not have heard of that place before. I come from Primeval Forest..."

Lin Sanjiu could not imagine what sort of end world scenario the world had from its name.

Perhaps, Lin Sanjiu's words were too harsh previously. After Green Dress said that, strangely, she kept quiet and did not look like she wanted to continue the conversation. After thinking for a while, Lin Sanjiu finally got straight to the point, "Have you met AYU before?"

Green Dress shook her head immediately, "No, I met her here."

Lin Sanjiu narrowed her eyes. Green Dress did not know AYU before, but Lin Sanjiu wondered why she wasn't curious that she had raised this question. She would need to do better if she was lying. That is to say, Green Dress knew why Lin Sanjiu was asking her this question.

Lin Sanjiu did not say a word and deliberated about the matter for a while. Just when she was about to probe further, the toilet door opened with a click. Walter walked out with a red face. He seemed even more embarrassed after realizing that there was another woman waiting out but didn't show any abnormal behavior. Green Dress didn't seem surprised when he came out from the toilet. She nodded at Walter and walked into the toilet.

"There isn't anything wrong," Walter whispered. "I hope those

extra lifeforms have nothing to do with us."

"You can go back first," Lin Sanjiu told Walter rather firmly. She wanted to get a little more information out from Green Dress.

After Walter walked away, she turned behind and found out that Green Dress did not enter the toilet. The woman had one foot in her toilet and was staring at her.

"What's the matter?" Lin Sanjiu asked, frowning.

An enigmatic smile appeared on Green Dress' chubby face. She had the same gossipy expression she had before. However, Lin Sanjiu sensed that she didn't smile because of Walter.

"I am very thankful to God," Green Dress suddenly said without any rhyme or reason, "especially, when I'm proven right."

Lin Sanjiu did not understand what the woman meant.

"This only appeared now. Otherwise, I wouldn't have suspect that you were with that teenager..." Green Dress' smile changed. Her expression was a little hard to describe. "You waited here because you were protecting the teenage boy, right? This explains that..."

"What are you talking about? This and that? You're being incoherent."

"Actually, I don't mind telling you," Green Dress pulled her foot from the toilet. After seeing that there was no one else in the corridor behind them, she walked up to Lin Sanjiu and whispered, "I'll start with my ability."

"Why is everyone revealing their ability?" Just as this thought surface in Lin Sanjiu's mind, it immediately changed to astonishment.

[Random Read]

Who says there are no benefits to being a gossipmonger? This isn't a role that anyone can play. An outstanding gossipmonger

usually has a keen sense of observation and the ability to discern the truth. Especially when it comes to relationships between men and women! After all, rumors wouldn't last if they didn't bloom from a modicum of truth!

This ability would "scan" everyone around the owner without any need for activation. After scanning the surroundings targets, the ability would randomly provide a characteristic of one of these people. The characteristics can tell the owner that the target likes to cook or even that the target is preparing to kill her... The results aren't always the same. The accuracy of this ability is about 75% or so. Accuracy and relevancy will improve as this ability reaches high levels.

"What do you mean?" Lin Sanjiu caught the gist but she wanted Green Dress to spell it out for her, "Do you mean..."

"When I first board the airship, my ability started automatically," Green Dress pushed the curl near her hair as if she was about to prattle non-stop, "You mentioned that many people might kill me just because I'm irritating, right? But, look. I already know that you wouldn't hurt me so I tried to strike a conversation with you. When I first scanned you with my ability, I got a green peace sign."

Even though Lin Sanjiu's combat ability was low and she had killed quite a lot of people, she didn't find the reading unreasonable. "I thought the results would be in words..."

"It could be words, images, riddles, anything. Even garbled encoding!" When Green Dress said that, she made a spinning gesture near her temple, hinting that people with garbled encoding as a scan result were mentally unsound. "Just now, I got a new result from my ability that you are a Mother Hen..."

"A Mother Hen?!"

"Cough. This isn't a bad result." Green Dress waved her hand, "From my analysis, it means you always play a sort of parental role..."

"Or a sort outstanding-role-model character," Lin Sanjiu thought to herself with a rather unpleasant expression.

"In any case, the results I got after reading you put me at ease. This is also the reason why I chose you. I need to tell someone something." When she said this, the smile on Green Dress's face disappeared. She rubbed her fingers nervously.

"You asked if I know AYU... I can tell you honestly, I don't. However, the results of my readings on her are very strange. When we first boarded the airship, my ability reacted very strongly to her. Consequently, I read her a few times. The first time, I received an image of a ball in a bottle. I couldn't interpret what that meant. The next time, I got a numerical 5. The third time was 5 again. The fourth time was 6... Anyway, I don't understand. But when I read her for the 5th time, yesterday, the results I got was a word—"

Lin Sanjiu held her breath.

It was only then that Lin Sanjiu was aware of the deep distrust she had toward AYU.

"Pregnant."

Surprising, Green Dress did not show any sort of ambiguous, conspiratory expression.

"What?" Lin Sanjiu couldn't comprehend that word. She felt that hearing the word 'dragon' might even make more sense than the word "pregnant".

Green Dress did not explain but she continued, "Then, today... after evening? I can't really tell the time. I read her again and the result was... 'given birth'."

Lin Sanjiu shuddered. After counting the extra lifeforms that Walter had detected, her face gradually turned pale.

After AYU had "given birth", there were nine more...

However, Green Dress had not finished. "Just moments ago,

AYU's result was 'pregnant' once again."

Chapter 309: AYU And The Toilet

27 hours before the airship started descending, the tall, burly man walked back to Area R after being missing for a whole night. As he was getting on in years, and had some speckled gray hair. He wore a crumpled blue shirt and an unironed pair of jeans. As Lin Sanjiu stared at him unblinking, the man lowered his eyelids as he sat in a corner, looking listless.

After the situation with the nameless man, Lin Sanjiu already guessed that the tall, burly man would return. She exchanged quick glances with Walter and Green Dress. After she nodded slightly, Walter cleared his throat a little nervously and stood up.

—

Just moments ago, when everyone was resting in Area R, the three of them met in the corridor and quietly exchanged information.

"If that's the case, the results I got from my readings are not metaphors," Green Dress said. Her name was Jade Zhang, which was quite unbecoming of her personality. "So, she did give birth?"

Walter nodded with a rather grim expression, "That's right. At least judging from my ability, ever since yesterday, there are many more living things than before..."

"Then, what did she give birth to?" Jade Zhang said with widened eyes. "Where are they?"

Even though the information from both their abilities collaborated, unfortunately, none of them could answer those two questions.

As they were afraid that they would arouse suspicion, they only discussed for a short ten minutes before returning to Area R again. However, even though it was only a short time. Lin Sanjiu was certain that Jade Zhang was already in on helping them. It wasn't because she had a strong sense of responsibility but rather because of her irrepressible curiosity regarding the matter. Lin Sanjiu

could almost imagine how Jade Zhang would relish describing this own incident to someone else with saliva spitting.

Walter stopped at the tall, burly man's side.

"Hey, I didn't see you around for some time," he sounded too casual, which instead made his words seem even more unnatural. "Where have you been for more than half a day?"

The tall, burly man closed his eyes and leaned against the wall without replying, it was as if he was totally unaware that Walter was talking to him.

"I didn't see you anywhere. Did you go to the cargo hold?"

He still didn't get an answer. Walter tried to call the man several times but seeing that he was still being ignored, he couldn't help getting a little angry. Just when he was about to shove the man, another person's hand suddenly reached over and blocked him before he could push the man.

AYU placed her arm across the tall, burly man like a guardrail. She smiled and said, "He is asleep."

Walter stared at her for a few seconds but did not say anything in the end. He returned to Lin Sanjiu's side silently.

Once the blonde teenager turned his head, AYU's pair of normal eyes with sclera stared in their direction. She seemed to be staring at him, and through him, at Lin Sanjiu who was further away.

"Did you notice? She had been sitting at the side of the skinny man. Now, she had changed her spot here." Jade Zhang whispered. As her curls shook, a strong scent of synthetic perfume rushed into Lin Sanjiu's nose.

Even when she was pointing out an obvious fact, she always sounded like she was being very secretive. Lin Sanjiu nodded and looked around Area R, pretending to be pre-occupied.

After being trapped in this airship for this long, dull journey, the

passengers started napping more and more often, having established a level of trust. Other than AYU and themselves, the rest of the passengers were fast asleep, including the nameless man, even though he had already slept for more than ten consecutive hours.

"Read that nameless guy," Lin Sanjiu mouthed to Jade Zhang. Afraid that she wouldn't understand, Lin Sanjiu eyed the man who had curled into a ball and had his back on the wall. "And that tall bloke."

Jade Zhang closed her mouth and looked at both men. For a moment, there was no expression on her round and chubby face. After two seconds, she blinked her eyes as if she was unable to comprehend the meaning of the results she had gotten, "The nameless man is 1.7, the big bloke is 1."

They were related to AYU somehow. They did not need those numbers to prove this relationship. The results only made them more confused and did not help them in any way.

"I want to go to the toilet." Lin Sanjiu looked slightly despondent when she stood up. Walter opened his mouth. He seemed to remember that she had stood guard outside when he went to the toilet previously. However, after deliberating for a few seconds, he was too shy to offer to go to the toilet with a woman. Lin Sanjiu felt very satisfied with this reaction.

The few morsels of food that Lin Sanjiu had on the airship was not even sufficient for her to want to go the toilet. On top of that, due to their constitutions, posthumans could function fine without going to the toilet for seven to eight days. However, being on the airship was so boring that going to the toilet was one of the ways of the passengers to pass time.

However, this wasn't Lin Sanjiu's objective.

Though the toilet was a necessity and was frequently visited, it was constructed very unthoughtfully at the end of the corridor. Its

door faced the corridor so anyone in the corridor could see who was coming out. This was exceptionally inconsiderate for the ladies, but Lin Sanjiu had a feeling that the crew of the airship didn't care.

The second Lin Sanjiu locked the toilet door with a click, Mrs. Manas voice rang out in her head. "What are you going to do if this conjecture is wrong?"

Lin Sanjiu sighed. "I don't know. If I still can't figure this out... I can only hope that AYU and whatever she gave birth to wouldn't look for us."

"I even hope that I have a real body, I'm living in a peaceful world and that I'll win the lottery one day," Mrs. Manas grumbled.

Lin Sanjiu ignored her. With some difficulty, she managed to turn her body sideways and look around her. Her wings were even more bothersome in this small, confined space. When they checked the toilet previously, Walter was mainly the person who checked the interior. However, anyone could see the whole poorly constructed toilet in a single glance. A toilet bowl was placed against a wall. There was some suspicious yellow-brown mark on its rusty body. It was disgusting to look at, let alone the stench it emitted. The contractor probably knew that posthumans that could survive and enter this world would definitely have endured worst sanitary conditions. Naturally, there wasn't a basin here. Oddly, there was a mirror on the wall.

Lin Sanjiu looked at herself in the mirror for a few seconds. The woman she saw in the mirror looked very unfamiliar to her—just like when she looked at her own body.

"How long are you going to stay here?" Mrs. Manas asked.

After she entered the toilet, nothing happened. Lin Sanjiu wasn't really sure, "Maybe, I'll wait for another three to five minutes."

When Mrs. Manas kept quiet, it was as if the entire toilet was

filled with the bad stench of urine. With every passing minute, Lin Sanjiu started feeling that her idea was stupid.

"Even though the two men disappeared after entering the toilet, you had come here before," Mrs. Manas finally spoke, almost as if to advise Lin Sanjiu to just leave this toilet. "If you were effective as a lure, whatever should happen would have already happened."

"No, you're forgetting something. I have never been to the toilet on my own," Lin Sanjiu reminded Mrs. Manas. "I only came here with Walter and I didn't really enter the toilet anyway."

"What about Walter? Didn't he walk out fine?"

"That was because I was guarding the door that time," she said a little stubbornly after thinking it through. "Right now, there isn't anyone outside."

Since Jade Zhang basically didn't go to the toilet, Lin Sanjiu couldn't use her as an example to refute Mrs. Mana. The other passengers almost only exercised around the corridor. If they did enter the toilet, Lin Sanjiu and Mrs. Manas did not notice.

However, reality seemed to be the best proof of Mrs. Manas' opinion. After being hyper-vigilant and staying for some time in this smelly toilet, Lin Sanjiu had no choice but to give up. Just as she opened the door, she couldn't help feeling that this was a total waste of time.

When she opened the door fully, she looked down instinctively and saw a pair of eyes, with clearly defined whites staring back at her.

AYU's had the same mild smile which made her appear graceful and polite. However, her smile was late by half a second. Lin Sanjiu clearly noticed the traces of astonishment on the woman's face before it was replaced with a smile.

"Why are you shocked?" Lin Sanjiu thought silently to herself and eyed AYU with her amber eyes.

"Are you shocked because I came out so early so I didn't end up like the other two guys?"

"What a coincidence," before Lin Sanjiu could react, AYU spoke first. When Lin Sanjiu looked at her at such proximity, she realized that AYU was not as young as she first thought, as the woman had some faint wrinkles around her eyes. However, AYU had a sort of aura about her that made her seem very young when she talked. "These five days are so hard to endure, don't you agree?"

Lin Sanjiu looked at AYU's abdomen intuitively. AYU was slim and her abdomen was also flat. It had been that way since the start.

AYU didn't seem to notice Lin Sanjiu's gaze and that Lin Sanjiu was guarding against her. She continued smiling, "Oh, I think I still haven't asked you this. Big Sister, which world are you from?"

Lin Sanjiu found it very hard to explain what happened the very next instance. She felt as though she was hit by a lightning bolt. Shortly after, the hairs on her neck stood on end. The next second, her right wing stirred like a monster which had been hibernating under the sea for a long time. With a strong gust of wind, the white bones of her wing whistled as they pierced through the air and lunged at AYU. Before her wing reached its target, Lin Sanjiu had already jumped to the left, slipped past AYU and was heading back to Area R.

The wings, which had been a hindrance to Lin Sanjiu over these few days, swung wide open behind her with a threatening fury. AYU wanted to follow Lin Sanjiu but was forced to retreat. The wings usually looked very cumbersome now loomed menacingly. The wings seemed like ferocious beasts with a life of their own. As they swept through the air, they almost severed one of AYU's arms which she had not withdrawn in time.

By then, Lin Sanjiu had already entered Area R. The flash of thought which struck her had come true.

Since they all knew that AYU was very problematic, Walter and

Jade would not react indifferently if AYU stepped into the corridor after Lin Sanjiu went to the toilet. Perhaps, Jade might have her concerns. However, Lin Sanjiu was sure that Walter would definitely follow AYU but there was no one behind AYU just now.

This all led to one conclusion. If AYU was free to do whatever she wanted, Walter and Jade Zhang were definitely in trouble. Most of the people in Area R were still lying on the ground and seemed asleep. Only two people were awake at the moment. However, this time around, the nameless man and the tall man were standing emotionlessly in Area R.

A person with a head of short dark blonde hair was lying by the tall man's side, his remaining body was hidden in the shadows. The nameless man was holding another limp body wrapped in a green dress. That body no longer looked plump.

The most shocking aspect of the two people were their eyes.

No matter what their original colors were, their eyes were black now. Even though their pupils didn't look like they were going to swallow up their whole eyes, four lifeless black eyeballs the size of ping-pong balls were staring at her.

Feeling that the person behind her was slowly approaching, Lin Sanjiu extended her wings fully.

"Relax," AYU's tone of voice was no different than before. "I'm actually not that good at fighting," as she said that she touched her almost severed arm. There was no blood. There was no minced flesh. It was just like a drawstring bag was dangling from her elbow, swaying slightly as she moved.

Chapter 310: 310

"What... what the hell are they?"

When Lin Sanjiu retracted her large skeletal wings slowly behind her back, she felt as if someone was squeezing her heart. Tighter and tighter. She moved her wings uncomfortably and tried to steady her breathing. Even after experiencing more than a hundred battles, big and small, this particular bloodless fight creeped her out the most.

There were ten soft, spineless, flexible things lying haphazardly on the ground. If it weren't for the clothes that wrapped them and their hair, it was simply impossible to identify these things as humans. Or rather, some human parts.

Lin Sanjiu's skeletal wings have proven themselves to be more powerful than any of the weapons she had ever used. They were swift, hard, nimble and sharp. Even the whistling sounds they made as they pierced through the air were painfully sharp. Yet, this level of strength was not even required to dispatch the current opponents they faced.

In fact, AYU and the other two men were just like three pieces of tofu in front of this pair of wings. Their attempts to resist were quickly sliced into a million pieces. When a part of their body was severed, it would lose its natural elasticity and form. They would then turn into tattered pieces of skins which fell to the ground like rags.

Lin Sanjiu used one of the ends of her wings to pick a piece of skin from the ground. Judging from its appearance, it was a part of a person's waist. As the person's clothes were no longer attached to it, Lin Sanjiu couldn't tell whose waist that was. It was empty. The person's internal organs and spine were missing. To be honest, if she couldn't see a navel, it would look like a broad, leather belt.

She fully retracted her wings, and the "waist" fell from the tip of

her wing onto the ground. Lin Sanjiu stared at it blankly and did not know what to say. The unknown filling in AYU's body disappeared like smoke each time she was cut, leaving only tattered skin pouches.

Lin Sanjiu frowned and thought for a while. She made a gesture and drew out a card. She looked at the card which wrote "an emptied human pouch", then looked at the things on the ground again and her expression became grim.

"It's too ridiculous to call it a mere coincidence. I wonder if they're related to this Special Item appraiser..." She sighed, "Actually, I wanted to catch them alive, but..."

Quite unexpectedly, her opponents were unbelievably weak. Lin Sanjiu was just testing waters when she attacked them but the three people had already been cut up into sections of human skins, like chopping onions in soup.

"Let's wake Walter and the others first," Mrs. Manas suggested. "Maybe they might have discovered something."

In the beginning, Lin Sanjiu was worried that Walter and the others would be like the other human pouches and wouldn't wake up. Thankfully, after slapping their faces, Walter and Jade opened their eyes.

When they regained their consciousness, the two of them jumped up simultaneously. However, before they could take out their weapons and use their abilities, they noticed Lin Sanjiu and stopped.

"Huh, when did you come back?" Jade Zhang looked stunned. She had not grasped the situation fully, "The two men charged at us just now. Huh? What is this?" She kicked a pile of soft matter, wrapped in a pair of blue jeans, with the tip of her leather shoes. Lin Sanjiu was convinced that that was one of the tall man's thighs.

"It's a long story..." Actually, Lin Sanjiu didn't know much more than Jade. After seeing that the both of them were alright, she heaved a sigh of relief and her expression mellowed. "I will tell you the details later, we should wake the others first."

The remaining five passengers were just like Walter and Jade. They had fallen asleep without knowing. Stepping carefully into the space between the people who had woken up, Walter walked to the side of the brown-haired woman and shook her shoulder.

"Hey, Lin, come over and look at this."

Just when Lin Sanjiu was planning to go over and help, she heard Jade Zhang's voice come from the other end of Area R, calling her to stop. Jade was crouching at the entrance of Area R, she was holding a piece of skin pouch. It looked like it belonged to AYU. As the light was too dim, Lin Sanjiu couldn't really tell what she was pointing at.

She walked over to Jade's side and bent down to look.

"This is like human skin," the woman clucked her tongue. Her sharp fingernails slid over the surface of the skin. "But, look, there's something here. It's definitely not human tissue..."

Lin Sanjiu squinted and inspected it but she wasn't certain—other than the thing looking a little swollen, she couldn't tell the difference. She gave a dry laughed and said, "I can't tell. Do you know, this piece of skin belongs to AYU..."

Jade was a little stunned and she covered her mouth.

"What's wrong?" Walter asked from behind her.

Lin Sanjiu thought for a moment and replied, "I went to the toilet, right? When I came out, I met AYU right outside the door."

After she said that, the airship suddenly shook a little. It must have hit another turbulence. The fluorescent light swayed above their heads, for a moment their shadows seemed alive.

The next second, before the faint gust of wind behind her back reached her, Lin Sanjiu ducked swiftly. With the momentum from the unstable airship, Lin Sanjiu slid to one side. However, before she could turn her head. A shadow from where Jade was crouching knocked her violently. With no time to react, she blocked the blow with her arm. However, the impact was too strong. She heard the sound coming from her shoulder. It was dislocated. At the same time, Lin Sanjiu was flung against the walls of the cargo hold. If she didn't extend her wings in time to catch her balance, she would have broken through the metal reinforcements of the cargo hold's frame. Even so, she received a very bad blow to the back of her head.

Even though posthumans had a much higher resilience, they were also more sensitive to pain. Lin Sanjiu gasped from the pain, looked up, and her vision was blurry—though this could also be caused by the anger she felt from being betrayed. However, since they didn't get her with this sneak attack, they were not going to get another chance.

"You...You guys—" Lin Sanjiu gritted her teeth as she spat those words. However, the remainder of the sentence was lodged in her throat.

It was as if someone had just adjusted the lighting to a cooler shade. Dust particles filled the air. Lin Sanjiu couldn't tell what was different. Right now, there were three people standing in front of her.

"You hit her head," the wrinkles at the bottom of AYU's eyes grew more prominent as she spoke with an unhappy expression. "You're so stupid. The effect has been dispelled."

Instead of Jade Zhang, she saw AYU standing in her place. The man who was the true culprit that had suddenly attacked Lin Sanjiu grunted as he pulled up the sleeves of his blue shirt. His actions were stiff. When he pulled his sleeves, Lin Sanjiu saw very clearly that his fingers had also tugged a piece of his skin upward

before it bounced back into place.

The nameless man who was shorter than Lin Sanjiu took a step toward her. He opened his mouth and exercised his jaw before he used what Lin Sanjiu knew as the most widely used language in the Twelve World Centrum in an unpracticed manner, "It's okay. Let me have a go this time."

Lin Sanjiu heard every word they said, however, she couldn't comprehend anything at this moment.

She had just woken Walter and Jade moments before. They even spoke to her. Yet, both Walter and Jade were still lying limply on the ground now. Just like the other people, their faces were as white as a sheet.

The nameless man walked closer and cracked a wide grin. It was as if he was trying to smile but the angle of his lips was wrong. One side of his mouth was curling upward and the other side was pointing downward. It was as if someone had torn his face right in the middle.

AYU scoffed, "Both of you haven't even familiarized yourselves with your movements. I'll do it."

As she said that, she walked closer. With each step, her dangling drawstring-bag-like broken forearm dangled from her elbow.

"That was a hallucination!" Mrs. Manas screeched sharply in Lin Sanjiu's mind just as Lin Sanjiu had reached a similar conclusion. Lin Sanjiu's body seemed to move on its own volition. As she leaped aside, one side of her wing swung open with a whoosh. Light danced across the metallic sheen of her skeletal wing as it stopped the two people in front of her like a furious beast.

The whole series of events which had just happened seemed like reality. It was as if it factually happened. However, this was not the first time she experienced this—

Still, this time it was different. She did not faint and she wasn't

fully immersed in the hallucination.

"To be accurate, it is a partial hallucination." Mrs. Manas spoke rapidly when she was nervous. "The environment you're in and your actions are real. Somehow, they only altered part of what you are experiencing."

It is common knowledge that lies made of half-truths are harder to discern. Apparently, hallucinations were the same.

Physical distance couldn't protect Lin Sanjiu from being affected by the hallucinations. Lin Sanjiu couldn't remember how they even got her. She was only certain that AYU could make her hallucinate even if she kept her distance.

"What are you?" Lin Sanjiu shot a question as soon as she calmed herself. She eyed AYU's deepening smile. "There isn't just you three. You have given birth to more things, right?"

AYU was stunned for a moment. She was interrupted by this unexpected reaction. She crooked her head and raised one of her hand to get the other two people to wait. Then, she flashed a loathing smile, "You know quite a lot. Give birth? The way you word it really makes me feel uncomfortable. I'm not their mother... But, from your people's point of view, it seems accurate.

"Yes. Just as you pointed out, I have given birth to nine of my companions. Since I answered your question, it's now your turn. I have been very curious about you... There is a smell of our meat nest on your body. It's really strong. I wouldn't follow you on this airship if it weren't for that smell. Have you seen our people before?"

"Meat nest— Our people— " Lin Sanjiu almost remembered Sajee and the large fleshy cavity immediately.

AYU, who had been observing her carefully, with her head still crooked, immediately caught the slight change in expression. "Ah, so that was it. Strange... How did you escape from our meat nest? Who did you meet? Why didn't the meat nest work on you? Why

aren't you talking? Oh, no matter how much stamina you have, or how good you are at combat, you wouldn't win this time. Why don't you just tell me what I want to know."

Lin Sanjiu bit her lower lip tightly. She felt an indescribable anger brewing.

AYU looked very relaxed. She looked so relaxed that she almost seemed haughty. It was as if she had already marked Lin Sanjiu as a dead meat. Not only Lin Sanjiu, but everyone lying on the floor in Area R seemed dead to AYU.

Her anger seemed to have ignited something deep in Lin Sanjiu, something shrouded in darkness. Lin Sanjiu stared at AYU and laughed softly, "If we think about it, the transport provider is too considerate."

AYU blinked.

"It is a five-day journey yet they didn't even prepare any chairs for us. Yet, they constructed a toilet for posthumans who don't even need to go to a toilet for more than ten days..." she flashed her pearl white teeth, like a beast snarling at its prey, "If I'm correct, that toilet is another of your meat nest?"

AYU straightened her head and her smile faded. "On a second thought, I don't really need your answer," she waved her hand dismissively.

Chapter 311: A Baby Was Killed?

When a strong swirl of air current erupted in Area R, Lin Sanjiu couldn't tell if what she was seeing was reality or her hallucination.

When she was hit directly by an attack, one of the dead bodies on the ground nearly grabbed her ankle. The airship fell sharply downward... After that, she totally couldn't trust any of her five sense. Everything that happened seemed like reality. Her experience and judgment had never been so terrible. To make things worse, when AYU tricked her senses once again, she clearly saw the chests of the people on the ground moving, including Walter's.

No matter what AYU's goals were, at least she hadn't laid her hands on them.

"But... what if I see a pile of dead bodies and blood dripping from my wings when I wake from this hallucination," Lin Sanjiu couldn't help feeling nauseated when she thought of the possibility that she might kill them accidentally in her hallucination.

To avoid hurting the innocent, she was even more restricted. In the confined space of Area R, she tried her best to keep her wings tightly retracted behind her back. Unless necessary, Lin Sanjiu didn't even dare to make any large movements. After enduring her opponents' attacks for a few minutes, the forearm she used to protect her face was already covered with wounds and blood. However, she wasn't even certain if this was real.

AYU blocked the entrance holding her amputated arm. She looked at Lin Sanjiu with a crooked head as if contemplating. Her two other companions had disappeared. Lin Sanjiu didn't know when they would reappear again to launch another sneak attack on her and whose appearance they would wear next.

"The more obvious a target it is, the more I should avoid hitting

it," Lin Sanjiu warned herself inwardly. AYU definitely was baited her to attack it that particular direction.

Just as revealed, AYU wasn't good at fighting. Not only her, but the two other attackers weren't able to cause any serious damage to Lin Sanjiu. If Lin Sanjiu's enemy was acting as aimless as she was now, he would be drop dead cold. AYU had already hypnotized her for four to five times in the past two to three minutes. There were many chances for them to attack her. There was even once when Lin Sanjiu thrust the tip of the wing into the wall of the cargo hold as she followed the nameless man. Mrs. Manas suddenly screamed for her to stop because that was not the wall of the cargo hold but the wall of the airship. Luckily, the steel walls of the airship were much thicker than they expected. Otherwise, if Lin Sanjiu was sucked out of the airship more than ten thousand meters above ground, no amount of luck was going to save her.

However, Lin Sanjiu could feel that AYU was losing patience. Lin Sanjiu wasn't going to wait for her opponent to use her final move.

"Is it ready?" she asked anxiously in her mind. "Is the entrance really where AYU is?"

"It's not ready!" Mrs. Manas snapped fretfully. "Try to buy me more time! I don't know which part of it is real!"

Lin Sanjiu sighed. It was not really buying time but rather just her helpless receiving AYU's blows. A dark shadow suddenly whistled downward on her right side. The tall, burly man slipped out from behind a cargo hold shelf, showing half his body. The green veins on his thick arms popped as he held a battle-ax in his hand.

Lin Sanjiu did not know whether that goddamn battle-ax was real or an illusion. She couldn't even tell whether that man was truly the tall, burly man. She could not retaliate and could not dodge. She was anxious yet restricted. She raised her right wing and took on the blow directly. Sparks flew just like when metals scrape

against each other. The ax slid over the edge of Lin Sanjiu's wing bone, leaving a shallow dent.

The tall, burly man looked at her without any expression. His ping-pong like black eyes slowly shifted to her back.

"Shit!" just as Lin Sanjiu swore, a burst of airwave exploded and lifted her upward. AYU, who was standing in front of her, smiled and opened her arms as if a mother welcoming her child. However, a black void like a black hole appeared in front of AYU's lower abdomen.

"This is their killer move? Or is this just another hallucination?" Lin Sanjiu felt her breath froze in her throat. Not caring about anything else, Lin Sanjiu fully extended her wings, trying to grip on to the two walls of the cargo hold to stabilize herself. Unfortunately, the walls of Area R was still some distance away from the tip of her wings. The only chance she had to react had slipped away.

"It's done!" Mrs. Manas suddenly shouted loudly as if she was totally unconcerned about what was happening to Lin Sanjiu at that very moment. Her voice was emotional, "I finally connected! I just know it. This little feat is nothing for your higher consciousness. I knew it! Ha ha ha!"

Before she finished laughing, Lin Sanjiu had already fallen into the black void. Surprisingly, her body passed through the black void and hit AYU. She rolled away from her and into the corridor. Shortly after, the airwave exploded, destroyed steel pieces fell all around her.

"Haha. You are alright." Mrs. Manas laughed, feeling very pleased with herself, "I have already attached your higher consciousness firmly on a real item. Otherwise, you wouldn't just pass through that." Mrs. Manas was right. That black void certainly wasn't some harmless accessory.

Lin Sanjiu leaped up and glared at AYU, who was right in front of

her. From her experience, she had realized the real damage that the hallucinations could create. The most serious injury she received was caused by herself.

It was an ingenious way of using those hallucinations. At that time, Lin Sanjiu had her wings slightly extended. She had leaned her back against the wall of the cargo hold. She was guarding against any sudden attack. However, she felt a cold feeling on her back. A sharp spike grew from the steel wall. Before she could react, it had already pierced through her left abdomen.

It was just a hallucination. AYU didn't have the ability to change the shape of the steel walls. Nothing actually stabbed her. However, even as the hallucination faded, Lin Sanjiu breathed heavily when she looked down. Fresh blood was slowly spreading through her clothes.

Her brain believed that she was injured so her body produced the corresponding reaction. In other words, her brain had created the tear in her abdomen.

The wound had punctured her body. Even though she immediately took off her clothes and wrapped her wound, she felt waves of dizziness. If it weren't for her "mutated" cells, she might not be able to stand up and fight as she could right now. She couldn't imagine what would happen if her brain truly believed that she fell into that void. There was no saying what sort of irreversible situation would have happened.

"Are you sure this would work? Can you differentiate what is reality and what is an illusion?"

"It definitely works. This thread of higher consciousness will allow you to test the 'reality' of the space around it. If you can't see a particular thing within the space you can perceive through your higher consciousness. It must be an illusion. The person standing at the entrance is AYU's true body."

" ... "

Without saying a word, the fangs of skeletal wings rushed towards AYU. AYU was bewildered. However, Lin Sanjiu froze when Mrs. Manas warned, "Don't touch her!"

"Why?"

"I attached your higher consciousness to AYU's body. If she dies, I'm afraid it would change things..."

Lin Sanjiu immediately had the urge to scold someone. In fact, she did. "Are you stupid? She's my enemy. But, now, you created a protection charm for her?"

"I have no choice. I can't differentiate between other things! Besides, weren't you planning to attack their nest..."

At that moment, AYU's face turned somber and she flexed some of her fingers. However, this time, the hallucination that Lin Sanjiu had was like an old television on the verge of a breakdown. The colors were distorted and fuzzy sometimes. Lin Sanjiu looked around casually and fixed her gaze on the "toilet" at the end of the corridor.

She did not know why she would think that it was a toilet before.

When the illusion was lifted, the strange smell of raw pigskin she noticed before became extremely strong. It was so strong that Lin Sanjiu could almost taste the smell of that meat nest. The source of the smell was from a flesh cavity that was oozing fluids. It sat at the end of the corridor guiltlessly and shamelessly. Its surface pulsed. When it quivered, it reminded Lin Sanjiu of a disgusting, giant grub worm. The meat nest was actually larger than the "toilet". Lin Sanjiu could imagine that when she entered the "toilet", part of the nest turned into walls, blocking the most important part of the truth in this situation.

"Why did the meat nest have to hide one part of itself?"

The answer to this question was now slowly walking out of Area R. The tall, burly man and the nameless man stood

expressionlessly behind AYU. The three people seemed to realize that something was amiss.

"You... you..." AYU frowned and narrowed her eyes. She was way more expressive than the two other people, "Hey, you two, try to activate it again!"

She already figured out that her hallucination was not working. Unfortunately, her other two companions weren't that lucky either.

"I'll play with you guys later," Lin Sanjiu flashed a humorless grin. Cold daggers shot from her gaze. Before the three people could react, Lin Sanjiu propelled herself forward and reached the meat nest. Standing in front of the meat nest, her right wing extended fully.

All the hidden spines and the retracted bones stretched open to their maximum potential. As AYU let out a shocked scream, a single thought flashed in Lin Sanjiu's mind and she had thrust her wings deep into the meat nest like a meat grinder. A rain of flesh exploded everywhere the next second.

The things that had been wrapped in that nest flew out with the sticky fluid and minced meat that spurted out. The color of those things were so close to that of the meat nest that Lin Sanjiu almost didn't notice them. However, when the bones of her wings pierced through one of those things, its shriek pervade the air. She finally understood.

Lin Sanjiu connected all the clues.

"You," Lin Sanjiu never felt so disgusted. She stared at the three people walking over, "You dig out the innards of people and wear their dead bodies like clothes..."

The lump of flesh with some humanoid form had four limbs and a translucent skin. After it cried for about ten seconds. It finally became limp. It hung on Lin Sanjiu's wing bone like a dead mouse.

Under the fluorescent light, the sticky fluid on it glistened.

Chapter 312: Wiped

Splat.

A shapeless shadow fell from Lin Sanjiu's hand. When it hit the ground, the empty four limbs flailed in mid-air with a curvature before landing on top of its own torso. A slit on the back of Redhead Ol' Jack's empty sack of skin tore open and was exposed under the fluorescent light.

The split second it touched the ground, a tiny shadow suddenly rushed out of the meat nest and toward the corpse. With a sharp shriek, it quickly dove into the slit.

Lin Sanjiu watched silently as the corpse started bloating. The thing which dove into the corpse wasn't that big yet it gradually filled the torso of the body. It started looking like a real person but this change did not last for long. When "Redhead Ol' Jack" stood up, compared to his companions, he looked like a completely different species.

Half of his head was like an empty sack which drooped down to his chin as if someone had stuffed a fist in his face. His chin was like a rotten peach. His empty arms dangled by the side of his body and whatever it was that filled the body stopped at the corpse's thigh. Both the man's calves were like two sacks stuffed beneath his thighs. At first sight, it looked as if the man was in the mid-process of melting into the ground.

The thing opened his mouth with much effort but couldn't make a single sound.

However, this was enough. Lin Sanjiu was secretly astonished that her most far-fetched guess was actually true.

AYU looked at the semi-formed body of Redhead Ol' Jack and then at Lin Sanjiu. She pursed her lips. Among the four lifeforms, she was the closest to a real person.

"Was she the first person to eat humans from the inside and wear them?" Lin Sanjiu inferred silently.

"There isn't any flesh and bones for consumption in that body you brought along. Even if a 'soul' entered, it cannot develop like us." When AYU spoke again, her calm expression disappeared from her face for a moment, but she returned to her usual composure after her voice wavered for a second.

"This human pouch is our handicraft—who are you? Why doesn't our hallucination work on you?"

"I thought you don't need my answer," Lin Sanjiu retorted and flashed her white teeth at the woman. There were a few pieces of translucent flesh squeaking like mice near her feet. They had escaped from their nest and dirtied the floor with the sticky fluid on their bodies. With a blink of an eye, they were all pierced by bones of Lin Sanjiu's wings. The pieces of flesh fell limp, twitched and died.

Each time a piece of flesh died, AYU and her two companions turned graver.

"Did you give birth to these things?" Lin Sanjiu said with almost cruel expression. She pinched the final piece of living flesh that was still struggling. Revulsion and sarcasm dripped from her voice. "I feel apologetic... killing a child in front of its mother."

"I already told you that I'm not—" Before AYU could finish her sentence, Lin Sanjiu squeezed her fingers together and AYU immediately raised her voice, "Wait! Wait!"

A pair of amber eyes turned to her. When Lin Sanjiu stopped applying pressure to that piece of flesh, it let out a sharp shrill.

"Okay. Okay," AYU raised her remaining hand as if to show that she was surrendering, "What do you want? We won't touch you. We'll go our own ways, alright?"

Lin Sanjiu smiled. Her wings loomed slightly above her as her

lips curled. Her opponent's reaction wasn't unanticipated.

The previous confrontation with them had already proven that these creatures weren't good at fighting. When Lin Sanjiu ground up half the nest, AYU and her companions tried their best to make her hallucinate. Lin Sanjiu saw some illusions once or twice, but her higher consciousness allowed her to quickly see through them.

As their best techniques were useless, AYU and her companion could only guard themselves, standing not far from Lin Sanjiu. They didn't even dare to rush over to save the flesh masses that Lin Sanjiu had slaughtered. They were very certain that if they were to fight physically with Lin Sanjiu, they would be killed many times over.

"There is one problem. You guys have already provoked me. More than once." Lin Sanjiu felt the disgusting, slippery texture of the flesh between her fingers. She un-carded a tube of chips she got from Kisaragi Station. She emptied the chips and squeezed the piece of flesh into the cylindrical tube. "Right. I should start with this question. What are you guys?"

AYU looked as if someone had stuffed a mouthful of mud in her mouth. She eyed the Pringles tube and replied, "Souls. We are Souls."

"Oh yeah, you're telling me that souls look like you guys?"

"No. No. Souls is the name of our species." AYU was unusually cooperative and Lin Sanjiu was not sure if it was because she had a hostage. "We had used this name even back in our home world... I have no idea who named us. But it is apt, don't you think? All organisms are just skin pouches to us. We are the ones who are in full control. Just like what humans described as souls."

"Where are you guys from? Why did you come here?"

"Have you ever heard of a world called Living Dead? That's our home world," AYU stared at Lin Sanjiu with her dark black eyes.

The two "Souls" which had consumed and now possessed two bodies, stood behind AYU with the same expressionless faces. "When the apocalypse arrived in that world, our species was born."

Lin Sanjiu felt a chill down her spine, "You... you are the cause of their doomsday scenario?"

AYU nodded her head slowly.

"In other words, they were just like the high temperatures in Hypothermal Hell, the frigid cold in Whiteout Blizzard, the radiation in Garden of Eden... things along those lines."

Lin Sanjiu could never imagine that the cause of an apocalyptic world could actually... travel as a group.

"No, this isn't right," she suddenly remembered something. "This world already had their doomsday scenario. It was created by those foreign red nautili—"

Lin Sanjiu swallowed the second half of her sentence.

AYU looked at her and smiled, "What do you think was inside those red nautili? It's us. Red Nautilus is already the third world we explored apart from our home world. In the previous world, we found a powerful and large creature... We took off our previous skins and entered the red nautili. We received some abilities from that creature... This is also why I can speak and move like a human. In a similar manner, we ate the red nautili from the inside and we could control their mucus glands and tentacles. We came to this world controlling those large shells."

The fingers Lin Sanjiu had around the tube of chips were already turning white. It took quite some time before she finally understood AYU's words.

"Are your species transported to another world every 14 months as well?"

"Well, no." AYU shook her head. "Some humans in other worlds are already capable of interstellar travel. Some creatures in some

places are also like the red nautili. After we ate them from the inside, we could travel through space. As they have already been emptied, they did not need oxygen or food. Before we came to this world, we had already drifted in darkness for almost close to a hundred years."

"Close to a hundred years." Lin Sanjiu was shocked. "These apocalyptic worlds already existed a hundred years ago?" However, she had second thoughts. If this "Souls" species can travel beyond a certain speed, they could have broken through the interdimensional barriers. If that was the case, time might not apply in that sense... As this involved Physics she did not understand, Lin Sanjiu did not think too deeply about it.

Lin Sanjiu knew that it was a little odd that AYU was answering all her question cooperatively, however, she couldn't resist asking more questions, "Why does your species aim to travel continuously to another new world?"

"Why do goats eat grass? Why do fishes swim? Why do humans struggle to survive the apocalypse? This goes down to the need for reproduction coded into our genes. Just like you humans, we want to reproduce. To look for the proper skin which would allow us to reproduce, we need to continue trying. Besides, if we don't die, each time we change our skins, it is equivalent to a reincarnation."

"You mean, your species can't reproduce?"

AYU's expression darkened as her gaze landed on the chips tube. "That's right. Each of the Souls you have seen came from our home world, Living Dead. I'm just a carrier. Over time, our numbers have dwindled. We never had any new births. You kill five Souls today, there will be five less of us. This is why I'm having this discussion with you. We don't have any great animosity between us. There is no reason for us to fight and hurt each other."

"Oh? Then, what do you suggest?"

"You still have friends in Area R, right? Our chemical hormones

can cause serious damage to their brains if they're stuck in that comatose state... I think it is worthwhile exchanging their lives for a single Soul and a peace of mind. Don't you think so?" AYU even added jokingly, "Other than our skins, we have nothing, so we can't compensate you for the injuries we inflicted."

Meanwhile, the two people behind her and that half-melted Redhead Ol' Jack did not say a word. They seemed to trust AYU to handle matters.

Lin Sanjiu felt a little overwhelmed by the amount of information that she had just received. It even made it a little hard for her to contemplate. Finally, she nodded her head. They were only a few hours from the estimated arrival time. In any case, her priority was to rescue the people in Area R from the hands of this Souls. She had time to slowly consider this issue in the future.

AYU was true to her words. After a few hours, as the airship slowly started to descend, she got the two men to wake the remaining passengers.

Though Lin Sanjiu had her misgivings, she couldn't help feeling a little relieved when she saw Walter standing up while he rubbed his eyes and Jade leaping up when she woke up and saw the two men. The other passengers were ignorant of the fact that they had just escaped being eviscerated. They were even grumbling that their sleep was uncomfortable.

"Okay, you should hand that Soul to us now."

After most of the passengers left, AYU said smiling at Lin Sanjiu. Walter and Jade Zhang stood beside Lin Sanjiu as if to protect her. They followed her closely and stared at AYU and her comrades with guarded expressions. Even though they couldn't see the meat nest and Redhead Ol' Jack, they apparently found it weird that once they were woken up the airship was already descending.

To be honest, Lin Sanjiu wasn't sure what she should do.

She wasn't willing to just hand over the Soul to them. It was proof of the Souls' existence. However, she didn't want to get involved with their species either. After all, once they wore and adapt to their skins, they would look no different from other real humans. Even if she wasn't afraid that the Souls would send their people to harass and ambush her, she had to be considerate of her friends.

Lin Sanjiu was about to hand over the tube with some reluctance. But when AYU reached out for it, she suddenly pulled her hand back and narrowed her eyes.

"You said too much just now. I forgot to ask you one more thing," Lin Sanjiu eyed AYU as her fingers grew cold. "Why did you make the passengers in Area R unconscious?"

AYU's mouth opened and then closed. She didn't make a single sound.

"After you gave birth to the first batch of souls, Jade discovered that you were pregnant once again," Lin Sanjiu hoped that she had made a mistake, however, the hairs on her back were standing. "This means you didn't just bring nine Souls with you... Before you looked for me in the nest, you made the other passengers in Area R unconscious."

A person behind Lin Sanjiu moved a little. Before anything happened, Lin Sanjiu's wings suddenly spread open and defended its owner like a beast.

"There are Souls and then, there are ready-to-use skin pouches," Lin Sanjiu's eyes and throat were uncomfortably dry. "Those people in Area R have already been eviscerated, right?"

After she said that, she felt someone knocking her wings gently from behind. Lin Sanjiu turned her body slowly. Jade Zhang looked at her expressionlessly. Her usually comical hair curls were now sticking tightly to her head. It made her look unnatural.

Walter was different. The teenager with dark blonde hair acted just as lively as before. His expression and movements were almost similar to his real person.

"We were buying time so that they could act more naturally with their new skins," Walter—or rather the creature wearing Walter's skin—said with a smile, "But, you found out anyway."

Lin Sanjiu felt a little nauseated.

She did not know how the Souls removed the innards of the humans they inhabited, but it must be rare for one of them to adapt and maneuver their new body so quickly.

"Walter" extended one of his hands to her and smiled once again, "Hi, I'm the queen of my species. It is nice to wear you today."

Chapter 313: The Distinct Differences Of Being The Souls Queen

The ability to create hallucinations is extremely convenient.

In the eyes of the exhausted young crewman, the condition of the airship's cargo hold probably looked the same as before. To him, the steel shelves have not been destroyed by Lin Sanjiu's skeletal wings. There were probably also no dents and holes on the floor. Consequently, without even batting an eye, he slammed the door of the cargo hold shut once all the passengers walked out of the airship.

The next second, the airship, the size of the town center, made a thunderous sound, spat out a strong gust of air current, and lifted off. It took quite a few minutes before the airship gradually disappeared into the distance.

When it had totally disappeared from the sky, the seawater that was displaced by the air current it created rushed back with a roar. The seawater created a high wall of almost ten thousand tons. Then, it crashed down on the surface of the ocean near a cliff islet with a terrifying speed. The surface of the ocean rippled. Even though this mini tsunami did not touch the cliff islet, the strong current of wind it generated created waves which rained down on the cliff as well as Lin Sanjiu and the other "passengers".

That young crewman must have known that the waves would make the cliff wet, so he naturally didn't think to remind the passengers that they would need to look out for the seawater.

Even though her clothes were thoroughly soaked, she could feel the tinge of pain as the seawater crashed down on her. After she wiped the water from her face, Lin Sanjiu felt slightly relieved.

At least, these creatures were isolated from other people, being in the middle of the ocean with her.

"Is this the transfer point?" Walter—Lin Sanjiu had habitually associated the person with this name—looked around. Lin Sanjiu couldn't tell if he was praising or mocking the place when he said, "Things seem disorderly here, but this world is actually quite well-organized."

Lin Sanjiu pursed her lips. She neither said a word nor move.

She felt uncomfortable just looking at Walter's smile another second longer.

In the short one minute interaction with the Souls Queen, Lin Sanjiu, as a human, already noticed that the woman did not understand the meaning of a smile.

The Souls Queen had been smiling non-stop.

Even as the seawater covered and soaked her, her smile remained. As a result, that gentle, light-hearted smile gradually became strangely empty and out-of-place. "I see. You, humans, don't like having water on your faces," [Soulsqn](#) concluded after she examined Lin Sanjiu. However, she continued lifting the corners of her lips. Then, she raised her hand. The other Souls behind her immediately wiped the water off their faces.

"Why are they imitating human behavior?"

After suppressing the uneasiness she felt, Lin Sanjiu scanned her surroundings. This cliff islet which had been used as a transfer point was not very large. The surface of the cliff wasn't leveled and there were a few dark green plants growing between the cracks of the rocks. There was a small wooden hut at the far end of the cliff islet. Lin Sanjiu didn't know what it was for. Due to the humid environment, there were mildew and layers of fungi growing on the wooden walls.

Lin Sanjiu tried her best to remember what she could see in her mind. Using her higher consciousness, she could tell that everything she saw now was real. She couldn't tell if it would

remain the same, though. After all, her opponent was the queen of an entire species. Lin Sanjiu certainly wouldn't make the assumption that the combat ability of the queen was on the same level as AYU's.

Soulsqn didn't seem to be in a hurry to wear Lin Sanjiu. In fact, she showed an extraordinary level of interest regarding this particular "skin".

"Ever since our red nautili shell had been defeated, we had been hibernating and recovering." Soulsqn tilted her head as she looked at the pair of wings on Lin Sanjiu's back. Suddenly, she commented, "But after all this time, this is my first time seeing a human that can alter her own body and develop such a powerful biological weapon. You are a growth-type, plus you have hypervariable genes..."

"Hypervariable genes." Lin Sanjiu didn't expect that Soulsqn could make such an accurate judgment in such a short time.

Even though the smile on her face did not change, her voice suddenly quivered, as if to express her excitement. "Do you know what this means? After I eat your innards, I might be able to replicate the method you use to develop these skeletal wings to create a reproductive system for us, Souls. Ah, this human pouch is simply perfect."

After she said that, she paused for a moment. AYU, standing behind her, immediately lowered her head as if she heard something, "Thank you for the compliment, my queen."

Soulsqn wasn't having a conversation with Lin Sanjiu, rather, it was more like she was talking to herself. Even though Lin Sanjiu did not reply, she did not seem to mind. "To top that off, ever since you came to this world, you have been interacting with our kind... According to you humans, this should be called fate, right?"

"Wait, how did you—" Lin Sanjiu was stunned.

"Are you going to ask me what happened to you before you boarded the airship? Or do you want to ask me why I know all that?" Soulsqn looked at Lin Sanjiu through Walter's eyes.

"Both."

"Oh, so you still haven't figured things out. One of us cheated a book from you. The mission I gave to that Soul was to gather Special Items from humans. Somehow, that book was a little weird. It activated automatically. It forced him to crawl out from his own skin pouch... Then, you met that kid, Sajee."

For some reasons, Soulsqn intentionally left out some details when she explained Lin Sanjiu's predicament to this point, instead, she turned to look at the kinspeople behind her. Other than that Redhead Ol' Jack, her other kinspeople looked like a group of normal humans.

"The reason I know all this is because I'm the queen. I know the physical location and condition of every single Soul, and whether they are alive or dead. I know all that," Soulsqn said as she smiled.

At that every moment she said her last word, a shadow behind Soulsqn dodged to one side. The person moved so fast that her green dress made a swoosh. Two other black shadows lunged at that shadow in a split second. They quickly subdued the green shadow.

When Lin Sanjiu realized that one of the shadows was that strange-looking Redhead Ol' Jack, instinctively, her body reacted faster than her brain in response to the situation. Her muscles trembled due to her sudden burst, she kicked herself forward with her legs. As her body leaned forward, she aimed her wings ahead of her, using the momentum of her movement. Before Soulsqn could react, the sharp spines on Lin Sanjiu's wings had already pierced through Redhead Ol' Jack.

There was a screech. A piece of flesh with stumpy limbs crawled out from the Redhead Ol' Jack's body. It was one size larger than it

was before. It leaped into AYU's arms. While Redhead Ol' Jack's corpse hung from her wings, Lin Sanjiu swung her bone and flung the other black shadow far away. That seemed to be the nameless man.

Even though Lin Sanjiu had temporarily defeated two of her opponents, Soulsqn's attack had almost reached her. Lin Sanjiu did a forward flip in mid-air, pulled back her arms, and let her wings fully extended. Then, she landed on the wet ground of the cliff islet once more, in a less than glamorous way. However, Lin Sanjiu had achieved her goal with that attack.

Jade Zhang took a deep breath in Lin Sanjiu's arm. "Ah," Jade let out a heave of relief after realizing that she was still alive.

"That scared... scared me. So, she knew..." her exposed skin, outside her dress, was whiter than usual. There wasn't any bit of color. It was also cool to touch. However, when Lin Sanjiu squeezed her wrist, that strong pulse explained everything.

Her pink lipstick on lips had been washed away by the seawater, revealing her pale lips. Her whole body was shivering either from being cold or because of her fright.

"You didn't die!" Lin Sanjiu's heart pounded twice, "Why? Why didn't you save—"

"I nearly died!" Jade Zhang suddenly yelled out. The next second, her voice became feeble as if she had lost all the energy in her body. She gestured to Lin Sanjiu, "When I returned to Area R, it was already late. I thought I could just pretend to be them and fake it till I could escape, but..."

"But, you didn't know that I had known all along?" Soulsqn walked slowly toward them. It was only then that Lin Sanjiu realized what had attacked her from behind.

It was the cliff islet.

The cliff islet acted as if it was satisfied with this group of

visitors. The part of the cliff that Lin Sanjiu had been standing at had already been crushed and misshapen and squished into the cracked which opened beneath it. If Lin Sanjiu was a little slower, Jade and herself would have been crushed in the same manner. Of course, even if Lin Sanjiu's body had been crushed beyond recognition, Soulsqn could still wear her body.

"You are quite astute and lucky." Soulsqn nodded at Jade Zhang praisingly, "When you killed that Soul that was supposed to wear you, I didn't have the time to deal with you. Thinking back, this is quite meaningful... After all, a human pouch that is smarter is better than one that is stupid. It is a little strange if you think about it. Since the person's brain would be consumed, you would think that it is just a layer of skin and that it shouldn't make a difference."

Lin Sanjiu instantly understood what Soulsqn meant.

If Jade Zhang had created some sort of disturbance on the airship and attracted other humans, it would create unnecessary complications. Soulsqn had intentionally allowed Jade Zhang to pose as one of them so that she could lure her to get off the airship. Then, she wanted the Soul in Redhead Ol' Jack's body to consume Jade—

Lin Sanjiu's turned her gaze to that disgusting thing in AYU's arms.

Even though Lin Sanjiu already knew that the Souls were a highly intelligent species, perhaps because of their external appearance, she didn't really take them seriously. It was only at this moment that Lin Sanjiu truly witnessed for herself that the intelligence of this species could match that of any human.

Jade's cold fingers held Lin Sanjiu's elbow as she blurted anxiously, "What should we do now?"

"My suggestion is that both of you should even give up struggling," Soulsqn's smile looked as if it had been carved into her

muscle. She lifted one hand and a large wave grew from behind the cliff. A strong current of water struck Lin Sanjiu. Both Jade and Lin Sanjiu could not react in time and they were slammed to the ground. However, the huge wave avoided Soulsqn as if it had eyes and splashed lightly against Walter's trousers.

"I'm different from my kinspeople. They can only create hallucinations. I can create realities."

Instead of using the Souls Queen or Queen of Souls everywhere, I've simplified it to this name.

Chapter 314: Resolution Comes With Old Age

After all the battles she had experienced, this current battle made her feel the most flustered. She would even describe it as exasperating.

"It's me!" Lin Sanjiu couldn't help yelling out when as she raised her wings horizontally to block a flurry of dancing Chinese characters. "Look carefully! Soulsqn is over there!"

This time there weren't as many Chinese characters. As they tumbled, Lin Sanjiu only recognized the character "Adhere". That character hit her skeletal wings. Just as she uttered "shit" inwardly, her wings sunk downward. It was as if it had suddenly be burdened by a tonne of weights. Shortly after, it froze in the air.

Lin Sanjiu gritted her teeth and tried to move her wings with all her strength. Her wings wavered a bit and suddenly stopped moving altogether. Just like the meaning of the character that Jade had aimed at her, her wings were now stuck. Two other Chinese characters struck her and were immediately activated. The Chinese character for "Soft" struck her bones and that feeling coursed through Lin Sanjiu's body. Before she could react, her leg suddenly gave way under her. She fell with a thud, half kneeling on the rocky floor. She could not feel any energy in her body.

The other character hit her and was activated next was "Fat".

Even though Lin Sanjiu knew that her body was still powerful and that she still had her streamline figure, she couldn't help feeling like she had suddenly gained many pounds. She felt heavy and clumsy. Just as she was trying to stand up, the difficulty of this task suddenly increased by countless folds. Both her knees trembled badly as it supported her body which felt extremely heavy. She even had to rest a few seconds. She felt as if her body was wrapped by layers and layers of fat making it very hard for her

to breath. She had to catch her breath before she could even speak, let alone fight.

After the three Chinese characters had been activated, they fell to the floor with a few clanks before disappearing.

"Hey, can you hear me. I'm not Soulsqn..."

As expected, Jade Zhang's ability was related to her blabbering mouth. [Fearsome Hearsay] was an ability which was very odd and difficult to defend against. After Lin Sanjiu had only exchanged blows with Jade a few times, she had already been hit by the ability a couple of times.

Unfortunately, the panting woman with bloodshot eyes couldn't hear a single word she said.

Jade's dress had been badly torn by the rocks and hung on her body in strips. There were blood, sweat, and tears on Jade's face. There were white foams frothing from her mouth. She bit her own cheeks. In her consciousness, Lin Sanjiu was already dead and she had been surrounded by the Souls like a trapped prey.

Under Soulsqn's command, all the other Souls, except AYU who was carrying her fleshy comrade, dispersed outward surrounding both Lin Sanjiu and Jade loosely. They blocked all possible escape routes. It was very apparent that though Soulsqn could "create realities", it did not hinder her ability to create illusions. Even though Lin Sanjiu wasn't affected, Jade Zhang was already spellbound.

From her previous experience, Lin Sanjiu knew that the effect of each Chinese character didn't last for long. They lasted only around 30 seconds. However, Soulsqn had been glaring at Lin Sanjiu with a predatory stare and she did not give Lin Sanjiu any chance to catch her breath. She suddenly raised her finger and pointed to the sky.

"It's here!"

Just when Lin Sanjiu looked up, Mrs. Manas shrieked her warning. A white lightning bolt which was almost 100 meters long lit up the gloomy skies. It broke through the clouds without any warning and struck the spot where Lin Sanjiu was just standing moments before. The scary lightning bolt came out of nowhere. Even though Lin Sanjiu closed her eyes, she could feel the bright light in front of her. The humid air suddenly became scorching hot. Even the hairs of Lin Sanjiu's back stood up due to the static in the air.

Lin Sanjiu twisted her body, along with her frozen wings, violently away from that spot so she managed to avoid the fate of being struck directly by that bolt of lightning. Despite that, a layer of black soot covered the front segment of her white wings.

Wrapped in a layer of fats—even if it was just an illusion—made Lin Sanjiu's movement much slower. The imaginary "fats" on her thighs and arms wobbled and slapped against her body as she moved. Her body was cumbersome and "soft". There were a few times when she nearly lost her balance.

"Words! Words!"

With Mrs. Manas yelling at her, Lin Sanjiu panted exhaustingly while she watched another flurry of Chinese characters flying toward her.

Jade Zhang had evidently planned the sequence of her attacks. After her opponent had lost half her mobility, the next series of characters show the true potential of the damage that her ability could deliver. With a sweeping glance, Lin Sanjiu already saw the word "Rend" and "Injure". However, as she couldn't move her wings and she was in a confined space. Just as the series of Chinese characters were about to hit her directly, Jade even heaved a small sigh of relief.

Yet, the next second, a strong gust of wind suddenly appeared out of nowhere. It whistled as it spun, creating a mini tornado. The

grasses along the path of the tornado were uprooted. The wind picked up the rocks, mud, and grass as it took the Chinese characters head-on. All the Chinese characters were pulled into the tornado and tossed into the sky. At the same time, once Lin Sanjiu felt that her wings had been released, she immediately leaped up and regained the freedom to move.

She knew that was a fluke as she held her [Tornado Whip]. If she didn't notice the Chinese characters falling to the ground like rocks, she wouldn't have thought of this idea. Luckily, she made the right gamble. The words created from [Fearsome Hearsay] were tangible.

After escaping Jade Zhang's attack, Lin Sanjiu rushed toward Soulsqn without even batting an eye.

"I already warned you," as Soulsqn spat out those words, the cliff islet began to quake. The large rock formation suddenly burst forth, as if it had a life of its own. It formed a barricade between Lin Sanjiu and Soulsqn, "You don't have the ability to stop 'reality'."

Other than that bolt of lightning, Lin Sanjiu paid no heed to these rock formations. She roared angrily and accelerated. Her shadow flashed erratically as the air particles vibrated along with her trajectory. With that sort of speed, it was nearly impossible to catch a glimpse of Lin Sanjiu's whereabouts, let alone defend against her attack. The rock formation and strong gale missed her over and over again. The Chinese characters which had escaped the tornado fell straight into the rocky ground. Yet, this obstructions did little to hinder her speed.

Her opponent might be the Queen of the Souls, but her physical combat ability and constitution wasn't that much stronger than her kinspeople. After all, those weren't the strengths of this species. Lin Sanjiu was very confident that once she was in close proximity, she had quite a few ways of maiming Soulsqn.

When Lin Sanjiu was right in front of Soulsqn, the latter only had the time to shake her head, as if she had not even processed the fact that Lin Sanjiu was right in front of her.

When Lin Sanjiu activated her [Mosaic Censorship], she felt her hands pressing lightly on Soulsqn's lower abdomen.

AYU had mentioned that after they eat a human's innards, they would grow into a similar shape. In other words, their heads were the most important and vital part of their bodies, just like humans. Lin Sanjiu had intentionally avoided the creature's head as she still wanted to interrogate Soulsqn to get more answers.

Unfortunately, her [Mosaic Censorship] which never failed her suddenly didn't seem to work. It was so unexpected that she even froze for half a second, thinking that pieces of skin would burst open in front of her. However, she found a dark gaze peering through Walter's eyes, looking calmly at her.

"I created a reality where you can't touch me," Soulsqn said softly. Her cheek muscles were raised, Lin Sanjiu couldn't even call that expression a smile. "Haven't you realized?" Soulsqn asked.

Lin Sanjiu looked down blankly. There was a fine gap between her hand and Walter's waist. No matter how hard she tried to get closer, her hands wouldn't move forward. It was as if the gap between them was filled with just molecules of air but a huge mountain.

"I am now creating a reality where your body is deteriorating from old age."

Lin Sanjiu who had just recovered from "obese" state, suddenly felt as if her body had been emptied. The strength and energy surging in her body disappeared as if they had evaporated into the air through her pores. She blinked her eyes slowly, this was the first time she felt a little tired while fighting.

"You are growing older and older. You are growing weaker and

weaker. Your body is in a state which spells your death in one week's time," Soulsqn spoke as if she was just narrating an irrelevant story.

Lin Sanjiu's leg muscles withered away, her dry shriveled skin clung to her calves. The weight of her body was supported only by her skinny leg bones. Her joints hurt badly as they rubbed against each other. She wanted to take a few steps backward but the wings on her back never felt so heavy before. It had never been so difficult to just stand straight. Lin Sanjiu blinked her eyes again. Now, she couldn't even see anything clearly.

"How is it? Do you still want to fight?" Soulsqn extended her hand with a grin. She touched the skin on Lin Sanjiu's face. Even though her senses had become dull due to age, Lin Sanjiu could still feel the goosebumps on her back. "I am the only one in our species that have gender awareness. I need a corresponding female body... It is truly convenient now that I have you."

"No way..." Even her thoughts were becoming slow. Lin Sanjiu held on to these words in her mind.

"If Soulsqn could really create any reality that she wanted, why would she need my body? Could she just create a body for herself?"

"Walter" grasped Lin Sanjiu's wings with one hand. The grin on his face grew wider and wider. Lin Sanjiu wanted to retaliate but just after she called out her [Vibroblade], it fell to the rocky ground with a thud because her frail hands couldn't handle its weight.

Another thought surfaced in her mind slowly, as if even that thought needed its own walking cane.

"If this is really 'reality', that would mean that Soulsqn would have to wear an old woman's body that is more than a hundred years old... Would it even make sense for her to wear this body?"

The muscles on Walter's face suddenly quivered abnormally. His head suddenly became soft and floppy. It made Lin Sanjiu feel sick

just looking at that. A smooth, moist dark red flesh slipped out from the back of Walter's neck as if it was taking off its clothes.

Compared to the normal Souls, Soulsqn's appearance was even more... terrifying.

It looked like an amalgamation of multiple skinless muscles. That dark purple-red blob of flesh was at least one size larger than the other Souls. It had a humanoid face. There were two black dots where a human's eye socket would usually be. As Walter's face hung flaccidly over his neck. After each part of Walter's skin lost its structure, it became formlessly. Soulsqn shook her fleshy body in the air excitedly, flinging a few drops of body fluids everywhere.

"She... wants to eat me alive..." Lin Sanjiu's thought as her body turned icy cold.

Lin Sanjiu waved her hands trying to swat Soulsqn's arms. However, she lost her balance instead and fell to the rocky ground with a thud.

The dark red piece of flesh had already taken off her skin around her waist. If the punctured head was strange, one glance at her body was vomit-inducing.

"It's great! It's great..." AYU's voice came from afar. Lin Sanjiu turned her head strenuously to look at the woman. She saw AYU carrying two Souls in her arms, that woman was so excited that her voice was trembling. One of the Souls was the one that possessed Redhead Ol' Jack and the other was the Soul that had fallen out from the chips tube. Jade Zhang was kicking her legs and swearing crazily behind AYU but she was still subdued to the ground by two Souls. Her screams were very sharp but Lin Sanjiu could only hear her hazily due to her aging ears.

With Lin Sanjiu current body condition, she couldn't retaliate physically. She turned back and saw that a purple-red strip of flesh was touching her neck.

Soulsqn seemed extremely delighted. Her body quivered non-stop, the moisture on her body glistened.

"If you can... you can make me age instantly," when Lin Sanjiu spoke, her voice was so deep and hoarse that it even shocked herself, "why do you have to manipulate those rock... rocks and lightning..."

Soulsqn stopped for a second.

"Look. Look. I can't even hold a knife..." Lin Sanjiu gasped for a mouth of air. Her chest was like a bellow, making loud wheezes as she breathed. She was betting her life and Jade's life on this, "but I can hold this..."

The purple-red stripe of flesh, the queen of Souls, couldn't resist looking at Lin Sanjiu's right hand.

There was a red card lying silently in Lin Sanjiu's right hand. Under the overcast skies, the card had a deep, dark red color, as if it had been soaked in blood and decorated with little dazzling dots of light.

[Nostradamus's Card]

Note 1: When a particular "doomsday element" is a living organism, this card cannot absorb them like radiation.

Note 2: However, when the card user is affected by any ability generated by this organism, the card can absorb the effect like radiation.

Soulsqn froze for half a second, it was like she couldn't comprehend what that card was. Lin Sanjiu wasn't going to explain anything to her. When Lin Sanjiu's [Nostradamus's Card] flashed, the small battery on it showed a 29%. Lin Sanjiu's body was immediately filled with her usual seemingly boundless energy and strenght—

All the Souls stopped moving when they heard a sharp shrill. They turned their blank gaze to their queen as if they couldn't

understand what they were seeing. Just a few seconds ago, their queen was just about to wear that human...

Numerous white sharp bones surrounded that piece of flesh like a cage. Soulsqn's "head" was firmly stuck within that small area. Lin Sanjiu stood up and looked down at the card in her hand before smiling faintly.

"I already figured out your bullshit reality," she smiled icily. "Do you have any other techniques?"

Chapter 315: A Dangerous Dog

Captain Marlon had been operating his airship service on this flight route between Free District and Cape Howling for quite some time. He had seen all sorts of people. Yet, when he opened the side door of his airship today, it was different. When he saw the three women and one man on the islet, he suddenly shivered; he couldn't tell if it was because of the cold sea winds.

No matter how he looked at it, these people were in some bizarre situation.

The loud rumbling noise generated by the engines of his small airship sounded as though they were going to die on him soon. As the airship vibrated noisily, the flimsy airship door shook continuously. Captain Marlon seemed all too accustomed to these little details. If he didn't see the expressions of the passengers who just boarded, he would have almost forgotten the dilapidated state of his small airship.

The person leading the group was a tall woman. She frowned as she examined the small airship and looked as if she was unsure if her white skeletal wings could fit through the airship's small entrance. She took a step forward after a slight pause. When she walked closer to the door, those two menacing wings didn't look like they were going to enter the airship but rather tear the airship apart.

Even though Marlon found it very difficult, he tried his best to avert his gaze from that woman's hands and pretended like he didn't see anything.

A man was tied up by a black leather rope. It wrapped around him so tightly that his body was deformed and looked like a broken rag doll. Two empty feet trousers dangled in mid-air as the tall woman held this misshapen man with her fingers. If that man's eyes were closed, Marlon would have thought that was just a

corpse.

A plump woman in a green dress followed close behind this couple. She seemed very frightened of the last person walking behind her and jogged a few steps to stay close to the woman in front, leaving the last woman behind. The last woman walked very slowly, but Marlon wasn't sure if that was because she was carrying a humongous belly.

"Aren't there supposed to be ten people?"

Marlon immediately regretted asking that question because, when he walked closer and looked at them, he noticed that the four of them were covered in wounds. They had blood stains and dirt on their skins and their clothes were torn and tattered.

He did not know what had happened between the ten passengers but from what he observed, that battle must have been pretty crazy...

Since he had already received their transport fare beforehand, Marlon zipped his lips since no one was paying attention to him. Surprisingly, the tall woman was the first to speak after they had boarded the airship.

"Excuse me, could you arrange our seats together?" Under the sunlight, her light amber eyes made a striking impression. As she spoke, she shook the black rope in her hand, "As you can see, we can't be apart."

The black rope had a slight sheen, the woman had wrapped one end of the rope once around her wrist. The other end of the rope coiled like a snake around the dark blonde teenager's neck. When Marlon first saw that, he couldn't help loosening his collar. Though the leather rope looked thin, it seemed very strong. The rope was so tight around his throat that his neck was like a tied sack of flour. The rope dug deeply into the teenager's skin, creating countless creases making one wonder how he could even breathe.

As if sensing Marlon's gaze, the teenager looked up with his pair of dehumanized eyes. Marlon shuddered again.

As Marlon's airship catered specifically to passengers who want to travel along the route between the Free District and Cape Howling, it had all the essential equipment and furniture expected. He arranged four sofa armchairs so that they were facing each other and conducted a quick briefing. When the single-arm woman walked past him, Marlon's heart quivered.

He had never seen a woman with such a huge belly.

It looked as though someone had folded up a few adult humans and squeezed them inside her. Her belly looked larger than her whole body frame. Her clothes had long been torn and the skin had been stretched so much that it was just a very, very thin layer. It was uncomfortable to watch her body which looked overstretched and deformed, almost on the brink of bursting. Anyway, from the looks of it, the things inside her belly were definitely not fetuses.

Being a person who managed to reach Red Nautilus despite being from an E-level world, Marlon was very highly aware that he should not get himself involved with. Without saying a word, he quickly disappeared from the passenger lounge.

After he had left for quite some time, the airship gradually ascended. Thereafter, someone in the strange group finally spoke:

"I... I still don't understand what happened." Jade Zhang closed her two hands into fists. She fixed her gaze on the two people in front of her, interchanging. Her skin was still slightly red. As she watched them, the two people did not make a single sound. The teenager still had a smile plastered on his face, but somehow, that smile seemed to hold some agitation and malice.

For a moment, no one replied.

"What do you want from me?" when the teenager uttered those words, his throat did not move a single inch. Lin Sanjiu knew that

the fake human voice was produced when Soulsqn rubbed her two little fleshy appendages. It sounded nothing like Walter's original voice. The wasn't a male voice, but it wasn't a female voice either. "You should know better. You can't bind me forever using this rope."

Lin Sanjiu did not speak. She looked at Soulsqn's empty and shapeless trousers instead.

30 minutes before, a dozen menacing white bones pinned a dark purple-red, non-human flesh mass to the ground. As it struggled and squealed non-stop, Lin Sanjiu had already picked up her [Vibroblade]. It pierced through Soulsqn's 'hand' without a single obstruction as if she was just piercing through air. It took Lin Sanjiu a considerable amount of effort to resist the temptation and impulse to just slice the piece of flesh into two. At the same time, the other Souls fell to the ground with twisting bodies as if they had been attacked themselves. For one moment, terrible cries pervaded the air.

"If I kill their queen, will the other parasitic grubs die?" While Lin Sanjiu contemplated, she dragged Soulsqn's original body out from her Walter skin suit. It was only then that Lin Sanjiu finally saw everything clearly. Soulsqn had made a slit at the back of Walter's neck. The slit curved according to the teenager's bottom hairline. It was also covered by stringy, sticky mucus.

The dark-red mass of flesh was like a human-size grub. As it wriggled in mid-air, the image was just numbingly gruesome. When Lin Sanjiu looked into the wound extending from the slit, she realized that there wasn't only just pieces of remaining soft tissues within the eviscerated body. They were interwoven with numerous white 'tendons' covered with mucus. It was constantly making gurgling sounds. She opened her mouth due to the pain and Lin Sanjiu saw her dark red oral cavity, and within it was another oral cavity and so on, layer upon layer.

Just then, Jade, who was not far from Lin Sanjiu, finally regained her sobriety. She fell to the ground with a plop, sitting. She was in a daze as she watched the scene which suddenly appeared in front of her.

"Wait. Wait a moment," two soft appendages appeared from her dual oral cavity and Soulsqn made a human voice, "What do you want—"

Lin Sanjiu raised her left-hand almost instinctively. As mucus sprayed everywhere along with bits of flesh, the creature's two "lower limbs" fell heavily on the rocky surface of the ground. The screams from the other Souls grew painfully loud but their legs did not fall off. None of them dared to approach Lin Sanjiu.

Enduring the slippery texture and the pungent stench, Lin Sanjiu pinned Soulsqn to the ground once again. "Crawl into that body again!"

Once Lin Sanjiu had dragged Soulsqn fully out of Walter's body, his skin became empty just like a skin shed by a snake. The fleshy mass with humanoid features entered the human pouch once more through the slit. The empty spaces were quickly filled. With a blink of an eye, Walter's face was reanimated.

Not long ago, the same face was telling her how beautiful his hometown was...

Lin Sanjiu curbed the sudden burst of rage she felt and took out her [ANTI Posthumans Collection: Female Slave Bondage Rope]. She lifted Soulsqn with her hands.

If she tied her up like a human, Soulsqn could just make an opening somewhere and escape from this human suit. Based on her memory of what she saw for just a few seconds, Lin Sanjiu remembered Soulsqn's body structure and bound all her movable joints. Then, she sealed the hole at the back of Walter's neck. Unfortunately, after she did this, the teenager's legless body was bounded so tightly that it looked extremely deformed, the body

was twisted beyond anyone's imagination. But, at least, the Soul inside could not move.

After Lin Sanjiu tied the last knot, she turned to look behind her.

The people behind her were all dead but the Souls were wearing their bodies like body suits. Each of them looked visibly paler than before. They looked like they had been dealt a huge emotional blow, but none of them dare to move. After all, Lin Sanjiu's skeletal wings were now aimed at Soulsqn's forehead.

"Command them to remove their skins," Lin Sanjiu lifted Soulsqn off the ground. Her fingers were firm around Soulsqn's neck, "if you want to live."

Soulsqn could not talk as Lin Sanjiu was crushing her throat. However, just as Lin Sanjiu expected, the Souls, including AYU, started removing their skins. As Jade Zhang screamed, Lin Sanjiu lowered her head and a cold smile crept onto her lips, "Your species can communicate through thoughts?"

"No. No. It is only one-way," as Lin Sanjiu released her iron grip slightly, Soulsqn struggled to reply, "I can send them messages but they can't reply...:"

"What is your total population?"

Hesitating, Soulsqn replied reluctantly, "1124 Souls."

That number was much higher than what Lin Sanjiu expected. She was stunned for a moment before she immediately laughed, "There are only nine here. Where are the rest?"

This time Soulsqn remained silent for a longer time. "They are scattered everywhere, they're preparing nests and gathering resources." she hissed only when Jade came stumbling and running toward Lin Sanjiu.

Lin Sanjiu nodded. No one knew what she was thinking. She crooked her head and looked at Soulsqn for a while. Suddenly, she pointed at all the grubs which were staring at her from the ground,

"I remembered you people told me that AYU is a carrier. What does that mean?"

"In our community, each member have their own roles. AYU's specialized role is to transport our companions... She can store more than Souls in their primitive state. After we found a suitable vessel, she can release these Souls from her body..."

"So, this is how that works."

Lin Sanjiu narrowed her eyes and took quite some effort to differentiate AYU from the rest of the Souls. After thinking for a while, she suddenly beamed with glimmering eyes, "If that is the case, I want you to get your kinspeople to return to AYU's body. Then, she can put her human skin back on. Um, be quick. I can already see an airship flying toward us."

"It can't be done," Soulsqn immediately replied with a muted voice, "They are not in their primitive states."

However, Lin Sanjiu wasn't a considerate person when dealing with this Souls.

As she gripped Soulsqn tightly, she swung her other empty hand. A card shot out. The targetted grub twisted its body violently and thought that it had dodged the card. All of a sudden, Lin Sanjiu's [Vibroblade appeared in mid-air and ground it into pieces. The rocky ground was covered by its grounded flesh and sticky mucus.

"Even though I want to bring you along with me, I don't want those things to board the airship with me." It was obvious that Lin Sanjiu had already made a decision. "If you can't make it work, I'll help you think of a way to solve this." Lin Sanjiu enunciated each word clearly.

From what it seems, the information about them reducing in numbers once any one of them die was true. Even though the Souls were unwillingly to act according to Lin Sanjiu's will, they bore themselves into AYU's body with much difficulty after Soulsqn

gave them a command.

After witnessing that, Lin Sanjiu did not want to ever think back on that disgusting sight.

When everything had ended, there was only a deformed "pregnant woman" standing on a ground covered with human skins.

Initially, Lin Sanjiu's plan was to burn all these remains with a fire. However, the airship was getting closer. The islet was also very damp so Lin Sanjiu knew it was going to be difficult to get a fire going. In the end, she decisively converted them all into cards though she found it rather disturbing. Then, she placed the cards into her pocket.

As this played out, Jade's face remained ghastly pale. She looked as if she was about to vomit any second. Even after some time on the airship, her forehead was still covered in cold sweat.

The gray sky outside was gradually turning dark, becoming a navy blue.

Lin Sanjiu, who had been ignoring Soulsqn and appeared deep in her own thoughts, shot a glance at Jade Zhang and suddenly spoke, "Oh, I haven't asked you something... How did you survive?"

The latter shuddered and touched her own chubby face.

"This all boils down to fate. Walter might have survived... sigh. Anyway, I just happened to be in the right place at the right time. When that thing," she pointed at AYU, "walked out of Area R, Walter and I were worried that she would find you so we wanted to go out and have a look. Considering that we are both women, he finally let me go out to check first... I survived because I left at that juncture."

"After I went to the corridor, following that gross thing, I suddenly decided to read Walter randomly." After she said that, Jade's voice grew sharper by a few keys, "His result was 'this is a

dead body'. It's true. He looked the same but he was already a dead body. I was shocked. I rushed back to Area R... No one was awake. They were all on the ground. I don't know if they were unconscious or if they were dead... other than those two men.

"They stared at me. My legs gave way under me. If I didn't have this, they would have got me." Jade pulled out a pendant. It looked like a tacky jade buddha pendant. It looked like the sort of cheapskate necklace that sold three for ten dollars, it didn't look like it had any unusual properties.

[A \$5000 Lesson]

When you were on a travel tour, they brought you to a jade store. Somehow, you spent \$5000 and bought this Buddha pendant made from scrap material on impulse. Yet, your monthly salary was only \$3000. Ever since then, this bloody lesson had never left your neck, because you have this, you can also retain your rationality.

Effect: Calms the user's nerves, reduce emotional blows, prevent fainting.

"I see..." Lin Sanjiu was enlightened. The Souls probably didn't expect that someone would have a Special Item that could keep them awake. Consequently, Jade Zhang managed to hoodwink them for some time. Unfortunately, she couldn't hide from Soulsqn.

Jade sighed and stuffed her pendant back. She couldn't help looking at the two Souls again. "Unfortunately, this thing can't prevent me from seeing hallucinations... That so-called queen, how did you defeat her? Can't she create reality?"

Lin Sanjiu scoffed lightly.

"Since we are on this topic, I really have to praise her. That reality... from a certain perspective, you could consider it real," as she spoke, Lin Sanjiu secretly moderated her higher consciousness. Ever since she caught Soulsqn, she had already moved the thread

of higher consciousness on AYU to another person. Lin Sanjiu pulled the black leather rope in her hand as if she was tugging a dog, "Come, since it's your ability. Why don't you explain it to her?"

Soulsqn lowered her head in silence for a moment.

"Descartes..." After a second, she suddenly said a name without any context. It startled both humans. "Have you heard of him? I think therefore I am. This is the basis of our species existence. It is also the source of my ability... What you believe exist, exists, and what you believe doesn't exist, doesn't. What you can perceive exists and what you can't perceive, doesn't."

In other words, from an observer's perspective, the "reality" that Soulsqn created did not exist, but Lin Sanjiu could perceive and experience as a fact, and even her higher consciousness perceived the "created reality" as a fact. As a result, the "created reality" was a unique reality that factually applied to Lin Sanjiu and was not merely a hallucination. If the Souls weren't a "doomsday element", Lin Sanjiu really didn't know how to win that fight.

Jade Zhang thought for a long time, with her mouth gaping wide. Then, she mumbled, "Ide-Idealism. Even idealism can become a weapon?"

Lin Sanjiu was stumped by her question. She never even considered this point. However, this wasn't the question that Jade wanted to ask most.

Even though she wasn't sure if Lin Sanjiu would answer her, she couldn't curb her curiosity. "And, why don't you kill them? Why are you bring them along with you?" she asked cautiously.

A sudden hint of cheerfulness appeared in Lin Sanjiu's amber eyes. She adjusted the angle of her skeletal wings behind the armchair. She crossed her long legs together and slowly replied, "Because, I have an enemy that does something totally opposite of them."

Chapter 316: Two Choices

Red Nautilus was the smallest world in the Twelve Worlds Centrum. Half of the planet's surface was ocean and there were four main zones with human civilization. Three of the zones were very close together and existed on the same larger continent. Cyber District was the only zone that existed independently on another continent in the middle of the ocean. Unfortunately, Lin Sanjiu found herself in that particular continent when she arrived in this world.

Even though Lin Sanjiu was aware that she didn't have the best of luck, she couldn't help sighing during the long journey from Cape Howling to Free District. Staring out of the window, there was only the dark blue ocean. She was already tired of this unchanging scenery. A few days ago, they flew above a forest of sea stacks, over a cluster of volcanos of all sizes, and over a vast stretch filled with the empty shells of dead Red Nautili. Thereafter, the only scenery which remained was just the vast, boundless ocean.

The few days felt extremely long for Lin Sanjiu, probably because she had to keep her guard up against Soulsqn all the time. Surprisingly, Soulsqn had been exceptionally quiet. She showed no sign of rebellion and did not even try to use her illusions on Jade and Marlon. Yet, that was precisely what made Lin Sanjiu feel even more high-strung and cautious.

AYU's abdomen had shrunk significantly compared to when she first boarded the airship. From the looks of it, the Souls within her body had already slowly reverted back to their primitive states. Ironically, AYU looked even more unsightly with a loose flap of skin covering her abdominal area after the over-stretched human skin suddenly lost its 'support'. Each time Marlon brought his passengers their food, he would keep his line of sight above their heads.

All the Souls would consider this period of time quite unlucky.

"So, you all travel from the ocean to the city crawling like grubs?" Lin Sanjiu asked, feeling curious, "Tell me everything from the start."

Soulsqn was silent for half a second. It was impossible to tell what her attitude was toward the questions from the expression on her human face, "Of course not. When we are near the surface of the ocean, we can emit pheromones into the air. Generally, all carbon-based living organisms would have a reaction to these pheromones. Fainting is a common effect."

After she said that, she couldn't help shooting a glance at Jade before reverting her gaze back to Lin Sanjiu.

When she was caught off-guard by Lin Sanjiu at the islet, Soulsqn had secretly secreted her pheromones at them. The creation of these pheromones required quite some time, and the amount she secreted at them was what she had stored for the past one month. Oddly, Lin Sanjiu was completely unaffected. It was as if her nose and mouth was just a decorative feature, and proceeded to sever Soulsqn lower body.

Unlike Jade, Lin Sanjiu was not wearing any sort of protective Special Item. Instead, Lin Sanjiu learned from her previous experience and was cautious when she was fighting Soulsqn. She had activated her [Defence Forcefield] and fully "wrapped" her whole head with it.

After the grueling training in Kisaragi Station, Lin Sanjiu's control of her abilities improved significantly. On top of that, as she was a Growth-type, the amount of higher consciousness she had was gradually increasing every day. She now had an abundance of higher consciousness unlike before. In fact, ever since she boarded the airship, she did not even deactivate her [Defence Forcefield] once.

However, Lin Sanjiu could tell from Marlon's behavior that Soulsqn had not tried anything funny.

"Continue talking."

Even though Souls obviously do not need to breathe, Soulsqn opened and closed her mouth when she heard Lin Sanjiu's command. When she opened her mouth, Lin Sanjiu could catch a glimpse of something inhuman deep in the "Walter's" throat.

"The unlucky humans who inhaled our pheromones naturally become our skins... The carriers like AYU are the first of us to don human husks. They were responsible for bringing our kinspeople to the city so that we can find for more humans to wear. We started living among humans. We built our nests and started gathering resources..."

"Are all 1000 over Souls in the Cyber District?"

"No... There are only a few carriers among us. There are only seven carriers. Besides, the coastal areas are sparsely populated... So, we came out of the oceans in batch. Some of us are in the Cyber District but most of the Souls are still deep in the ocean."

"I have seen one of your nests... There were many unconscious people there. What is its purpose?"

Soulsqn stopped talking for a moment as if she was unwilling to continue explaining. However, she hardly had a choice. Lin Sanjiu took the effort to bring AYU and the other Souls along with them with one important purpose. She could threaten Soulsqn with the lives of other Souls and the other Souls with Soulsqn's life. If Soulsqn refused to speak, Lin Sanjiu was going to cut AYU open and kill one of the Souls. If Soulsqn tried to hide any information or give her false information, she was going to kill another Soul.

As expected, Soulsqn continued, "We are making preparations for our other kinspeople. No matter how powerful we are, we can't simply go on the streets and make people unconscious... That is our storehouse. There is the scent of our storehouse on your body. That was also the reason why AYU targeted you."

Lin Sanjiu couldn't resist taking a whiff of herself, but she didn't notice any scent. Lin Sanjiu frowned and probed further, "Storehouse? Many of the humans have been unconscious for such a long time that they barely looked human. How are you going to use them?"

Soulsqn calmly replied her, "We will use those that are still viable. We will disregard the rest. Anyway, we would always bring new batches of humans to our storehouse."

Lin Sanjiu realized what that meant. If it weren't for her actions, Faun, the young man in a Zhongshan suit and the rest of the people in that storehouse would die as "perishable goods". Lin Sanjiu tried her best to hide her emotions and tried to maintain her expressionless face as she continued interrogating, "After being knocked out, humans would sink into their hallucinations."

Soulsqn nodded.

"Then... when was I knocked unconscious?"

Soulsqn knew the status of all her kinspeople. Naturally, it wasn't hard to infer that she probably knew what Sajee was up to. As expected, Soulsqn shifted her body a bit and replied, "You were in contact with a Soul. You have a scent but you were not knocked unconscious then. When you walked out of the small alley, another of our kinspeople noticed you. Sajee was one of the Souls responsible for transporting you."

Lin Sanjiu was stunned for a second. She never even considered the possibility that she was caught in their illusion so early. She remembered that she was planning to go back to find the young chap that led her to that house in the first place. She really didn't know that she was knocked unconscious before even returning to the basement of the building with all the appraisal agencies!

Soulsqn had not finished her answer.

"Before you found yourself at the bottom of the ravine, you woke

up once. But, you walked into our storehouse on your own after Sajee made you hallucinate."

Considering Soulsqn's explanation, Lin Sanjiu could piece the puzzle together.

Faun and the others did not travel with her. They had been trapped in the Souls' nest a few months before Lin Sanjiu. The reason she could see her "neighbors" in that flesh prison and even her "transporter", Sajee, was because her higher consciousness was trying to warn her that everything around her was not what it seemed.

Lin Sanjiu felt a sudden chill. After she died in Kisaragi Station, she had not experienced such fear. Jade sat silently, looking somewhat stunned. She didn't know much of what had happened so she couldn't really make sense of their conversation. Yet, Lin Sanjiu did not plan to tell her the full story. Consequently, the airship fell into a sort of strange silence.

The silence was abruptly interrupted by a creak from the door.

Marlon peeked from behind the door and saw four pairs of eyes staring directly at him. He excused himself with a quick cough and pushed open the door with his shoulder. He was holding a tray with a flask of water and two glass cups. There was also a plate with some jerkies and flatbreads.

As he was the only crew onboard the airship, Marlon did everything even though he was the captain.

Even though Lin Sanjiu gave the captain quite a sum of red crystals for the food and water, Marlon came with food a little too frequently. It wasn't even afternoon and Marlon had already approached them twice. He brought dried fruits the previous time.

Lin Sanjiu looked at the middle-aged man once. She wanted to say something but felt that she was just being overly cautious. When she reached for the flask, Marlon quickly interjected, "Let

me do it." Then, he eagerly poured a glass of water for her.

The water in the glass was crystal clear and Lin Sanjiu felt refreshed just looking at it.

The two Souls sat expressionless opposite Lin Sanjiu. They did not even look once at the food. Meanwhile, Jade had been staring out of the window for some time and appeared dispirited. After considering for some time, Lin Sanjiu took a sip of water. The water tasted alright, it was just plain water with a slight taste of rust. It slipped down her throat. After waiting for a while, Lin Sanjiu didn't notice anything wrong.

"I must be too paranoid." Lin Sanjiu exhaled and withdrew her higher consciousness from the glass of water.

"The flatbreads are quite delicious, why don't you try one?" Marlon stayed a little longer with them and smiled while he recommended the snack, "I bought this from Depizza. It is their local specialty. People like to bring this back when they return from that world..."

Inexplicably, Lin Sanjiu found it difficult to say "not now" to the man. After hesitating, she finally took one flatbread from the plate. The yellow flatbread looked crisp and delicate. It had a mysterious aroma but it looked tasty. The only downside was that it was larger than a human's head so it wasn't easy to hold.

Lin Sanjiu tore a corner of the flatbread and turned to Marlon saying, "I know, you can go back fir—"

Before she finished her sentence, her vision became blurry.

A dense gray smoke suddenly appeared from nowhere. It seemed slow but it filled the room in the blink of an eye. When Lin Sanjiu suddenly realized her predicament and leaped up. She could only see gray smoke all around her. The smoke was so thick that she couldn't even see her chest when she looked down. When she brought her hand right in front of her eyes, she discovered that the

smoke was coming out of the torn part of the flatbread.

As the smoke surrounded her, she could even see the small particles it carried. She had merely taken two breaths and her nose felt extremely uncomfortable.

[Haze Essence]

Just as the name suggests, this Special Item is concocted from the best essence of industrial smog. It can reduce visibility, cause serious health problems and can be hidden in various objects. When it is released, it would provide a dramatic surprise.

"Marlon wouldn't just target me for no reason. It must be something those two Souls did." Lin Sanjiu swore silently. She felt an instant stinging in her eyes as if they had been burned. Her eyes started tearing non-stop. The effect of Haze Essence was pretty much instant. After just two seconds, her respiratory tract, mouth, and eyes were affected. It was as if someone had buried her in sand. The second she shut her eyes involuntarily, a black shadow tried to stab her from one side. Her hair stood on end immediately while she activated her Higher Consciousness Scan. Lin Sanjiu twisted her body sharply and barely dodged a knight lance in Marlon's hand.

"Jade Zhang!" Lin Sanjiu stabilized herself and growled, "Watch them!"

No answer came from within the smoke.

It was almost as if the smoke had even swallowed Jade's existence. She sat quietly and appeared unaware of the situation around her. If Lin Sanjiu stared harder, she might have spotted the plump lady yawning in boredom.

The knight lance struck from her side again, almost like a serpent. Lin Sanjiu's wings shifted subtly before suddenly reacting as if it was alive, blocking the lance.

As a matter of fact, Marlon's combat capability wasn't much

better than the Souls'. Lin Sanjiu could easily come up with five to six different strategies to incapacitate him. However, Lin Sanjiu found herself unable to do much. It wasn't because they weren't on a moving airship with the captain in front of her. Neither was it because she was afraid of any sneak attacks from the two Souls.

She simply couldn't harm Marlon.

[Familiarity Breeds Fondness]

There is supposedly a psychological phenomenon where people would find a face more attractive the more they look at it. Could this be the basis of for the familiarity principle? Many people are saved from being single because of this particular phenomenon.

A middle-aged man without much money and charisma had developed this ability through desperation. Originally, he thought he could finally find a wife with this ability yet the ability only worked on his own enemies.

Instructions: The user must create many opportunities for the target to see him. The more frequent the target sees the user, the stronger the fondness for the user, which means the target would be less likely to attack the user.

It was quite obvious that Marlon had taken a few days to prepare beforehand so that he could fully utilize his ability. Lin Sanjiu had seen him at least twice to thrice per day over the past few days, and as a result, the effect of his ability was painfully obvious. Each time she had the thought to retaliate, both her hands would fall to her side limply as if her bones have been drawn out and she would feel no will to fight at all.

Amidst the smog, Lin Sanjiu heard a soft rustling sound from the direction of the two Souls. Lin Sanjiu focused on them but heard another clashing sound as the lance hit her skeletal wings again. At the same time, Lin Sanjiu caught a very silent thud.

Lin Sanjiu identified the sound the very next second. It was the

sound of Soulsqn freeing herself. From the start, the two Souls did not count on Marlon defeating Lin Sanjiu. This was all a distraction. Lin Sanjiu had gotten her [ANTI Posthumans Collection: Female Slave Bondage Rope] from the Garden of Eden, she didn't actually know the right way to use it. She didn't even have the full collection. It was actually already quite incredible that she could restrain Soulsqn with it for such a long time.

"I have no choice but to use that..." Lin Sanjiu thought to herself feeling a slight sense of loss. Subsequently, she gritted her teeth as a thin piece of card appeared in her hand. She immediately slammed the card on the floor.

"Stop!"

As that particular action did not result in Marlon being physically harmed, Lin Sanjiu successfully evoked [Souls Queen's Reality] from her Nostradamus' Card. It quickly affected the owner of the knight lance.

This was the first time Lin Sanjiu was using the Souls' ability. She waited anxiously for a few seconds and finally the gray smoke gradually abated. Past the disappearing smoke, Marlon's face was pale. Lin Sanjiu didn't know what sort of "reality" Marlon was seeing, but he was panting. He slowly slipped to the floor and sat down. His lance fell to the floor with a thud.

After regaining her freedom, Soulsqn observed Lin Sanjiu standing some distance away. As she did not have legs, the way she was "standing" was mind-numbingly creepy. However, Lin Sanjiu's only had her gaze on Soulsqn for half a second before focusing her gaze on AYU, who was standing behind Soulsqn.

AYU was standing right beside a window. The vast open skies and ocean were on the opposite side of the window. Lin Sanjiu exhaled slowly. She did not know what sort of physics principles affected the flight of the airship. Neither did she know how high they were. However, all her experience from before the apocalypse

situation told her that no one, other than the Souls, would survive if that window was compromised.

While the Souls stared at her, she smiled. She pulled the armchair she had previously knocked over closer to her. Then, she sat down. While Soulsqn was visibly stunned by her action, AYU immediately placed her hands away from the window.

"You guys have been drifting and struggling for so many years. Your main goal is to find a way to reproduce and create your next generation, right?" Lin Sanjiu spoke very slowly, in an intentional manner. Her words were clearly rhetorical.

"But, no matter how many worlds you have been to, you can't find a suitable host body to reproduce." She pointed to Soulsqn and continued, "You were interested to take over my body because you noticed that I was different from other humans. I have hypervariable genes... Also, I managed to modify my own body."

When Soulsqn's gaze landed on the skeletal wings behind her back, Lin Sanjiu was almost convinced she saw a glint in those eyes.

"But, have you ever considered this question? How did I modify myself?" she crooked her head and asked quietly.

As expected, that questions provoked a response from Soulsqn.

"How did you do that?"

"I know a person," Lin Sanjiu's smile remained on her face. "She personally designed and created a new species of sentinel being. Furthermore, they can reproduce."

God knows if those "Sages" could reproduce, but that didn't stop Lin Sanjiu from continuing, "She helped me modify my body, taking me as a friend... You noticed my skeletal wings, right? They're quite powerful, aren't they?"

No one would ever interpret Nüwa's action of helping Lin Sanjiu develop a set of weapons as being an act of animosity. Similarly,

Soulsqn was no exception. She eyed Lin Sanjiu's skeletal wings without moving. She only spoke after some time.

"What... do you mean?"

"I think what I am trying to convey is very clear," Lin Sanjiu said coolly. "You have two choices. You can either continue standing there and let me kill you guys before you break that window. Or, you can come back here obediently. Sit down in your armchairs and think about how you are going to make your requests when you meet my friend. What would you choose?"

As the Free District appeared in far in the horizon, Soulsqn sat in an armchair, staring down at the human settlement outside the airship.

Chapter 317: Free District, here I come!

After the small, dingy airship vibrated for a long time and finally stabilized again, Lin Sanjiu looked up and nodded at AYU. The latter's face was stoic, and Lin Sanjiu couldn't tell what expression she was making. She made a gesture and Jade, who was sitting in front of her, suddenly shuddered. Jade blinked her eyes a few times as if she had just woken up. It took at least half a minute for Jade to snap to her senses as she asked, "Have we reached our destination?"

It was no surprise that she was shocked. In her mind, they had only sat in silence for five minutes, flying above the ocean.

"They've been so quiet all this time. It's quite strange." Jade remarked before suddenly realizing that Soulsqn was not tied up. Her face turned white, "She... She! What happened?"

"Don't worry," Lin Sanjiu consoled with a slight hint of amusement. She stood up and said, "They have decided to turn over a new leaf."

"What new leaf?" Jade showed an expression as if someone had punched her in the face. She didn't know how to react for quite some time. After hearing Lin Sanjiu's obvious nonsensical explanation, the two Souls remained expressionless and definitely did not look like they were going to explain. AYU stood up without saying a word and carried Soulsqn. The latter's empty trousers fluttered as AYU walked past Jade.

"Huh? What was that about?" Jade thought to herself. In her mind, they were just sitting beside her moments before, yet she couldn't connect what had just happened. This confusion was actually caused by Soulsqn's ability.

"If the reality I create only works on one person, what is the difference between my ability and the other Souls' illusion?" Soulsqn said after the situation with Lin Sanjiu had calmed down.

"Since I call it a reality, there is some level of authenticity... As an intelligent being, you should know the power of thoughts."

At that time, Lin Sanjiu was standing right in front of Marlon and wasn't quite sure what to do with him. When she heard what Soulsqn had said, she immediately looked at her and asked, "What are you implying?"

"You better stand further from him now," Soulsqn turned her head 180 degrees around and her chin angled over her back. She sounded almost haughty as she explained, "I didn't explain the full extent of my ability. People who are affected by my ability are like... a sort of transducer. Your world should have something like that too."

"As sentient beings, humans cognitive thoughts possess a sort of power. Under the influence of my ability, this cognitive power can create a certain level of reality. People who have a stronger will, spirit, consciousness, and awareness have a greater potential of 'exuding' that reality."

When Soulsqn saw Lin Sanjiu's clueless face, she laughed out. That was the first time she laughed since her legs have been severed. It was also the first time she had chosen the right context to laugh. "As expected, you haven't realized this. The waves and the lightning I cast at you were all real. When you grew old, it was also real. That truly happened to you on that islet. Others could also observe and see what was happening to you. Or, I should put it this way, you have a very strong psyche so you could make them real. The effects disappeared because you used some strange thing which absorbed the effect of my ability."

Lin Sanjiu was stunned for a few seconds before she finally closed her gaping mouth. She watched as Marlon stood up and looked past her as if she was nothing. Then, Lin Sanjiu looked at Soulsqn and felt foolish.

"What... what sort of reality is he channeling now?"

Lin Sanjiu was surprised when Soulsqn reacted with a very human-like action. She shrugged her shoulders and replied with an unconcerned tone, "You absorbed the effect of my ability and re-released it. How would I know? You should ask yourself."

Lin Sanjiu only shouted for Marlon to stop. Therefore, a logical deduction would be that Marlon's reality would be built based on that. However, Lin Sanjiu was just trying her luck when she released that effect, she certainly had no idea what sort of reality Marlon was experiencing right now. But, that question wasn't left unanswered for long.

Marlon, who had been treating Lin Sanjiu as if she wasn't there, walked over to Soulsqn and said, "Hey, I don't think you guys are traveling with that woman right. Now that she is dead, I hope you would keep this all a secret."

After AYU nodded her head at him, he dragged himself out of the passenger area with some difficulty. When Lin Sanjiu watched blankly as he walked away, Soulsqn laughed at her again.

"You're really lucky. His psyche isn't that strong. But, I think you shouldn't stay on this airship for too long. We really wouldn't know how his 'reality' will affect you."

Lin Sanjiu also discovered the answer to that question very quickly.

She first noticed that something was wrong when she spotted that one of her nails was missing a corner. It was as if it had been bitten off by a small worm. That missing bit was so small that she could have almost missed it. After a few hours, when Lin Sanjiu turned her head casually, she realized that her hair which was around neck's length was now shorter by quite a bit.

"Oh, it seems to be slowly consuming you," Soulsqn commented calmly. "Don't worry, the effect of that ability wouldn't last forever."

Even though Lin Sanjiu did not feel any pain or anything else and knew that she wouldn't be nibbled to bits so easily, there was definitely no one in this world that would just wait for themselves to slowly disappear. Because of this, Lin Sanjiu couldn't wait to get off the airship when it landed. She couldn't wait to get away from Marlon. The two Souls followed behind her. Jade only dared to step out after the two Souls left for some time.

Apparently, this terminal for long-distance airships was not very well maintained. It wasn't so much of an airship registration point. It was more like a wasteland closest to the coast. There were a few buildings which were haphazardly built nearby. The landscape was covered with various rock outcrops and the ground was covered with uneven rocks of all shapes and sizes. The airship landed on the largest flat rock. The ground was so uneven that when they got down from the airship it was easy for them to twist an ankle if they weren't careful.

From where they were, they had to still walk a few days before they could reach Free District. Anyone who wanted to go to the Free District could only go there on foot. One needed a map and at least a little luck. After buying a map from a shoddily built wooden hut, Jade bid farewell to Lin Sanjiu. Even though she had gone through a near-death experience with Lin Sanjiu, she clearly did not wish to continue her journey with her and those two weird creatures. "Look, girl. I only have five to six months left in this world. What you and those things plan to do is really none of my business. To put it crudely, we probably won't meet again. Thank you for saving my life, anyway. I won't hold you back further, you just go ahead and do what you need to do, alright?"

Lin Sanjiu wasn't surprised. The Souls were obvious trouble. If a person doesn't look out for him or herself, they wouldn't last long enough to reach the Twelve Worlds Centrum.

After she parted ways with Jade, Lin Sanjiu continued on her journey with her two human-skin donning parasite companions.

With one less human, Soulsqn spoke more freely. She settled in AYU's arms and shot glances at Lin Sanjiu every now and then. The red arteries in her eyes flashed every so often, "You mentioned that you had an enemy. Who's that? Are you planning to get me to deal with him?"

"Yeah. He seems rather influential in Twelve Worlds Centrum. I don't know if you can do anything to him." Lin Sanjiu replied and then mumbled to herself. Soulsqn's words had reminded Lin Sanjiu about something. The last time she saw Puppeteer, her face was covered by the decorative marks from that [Versu Poison]. She wasn't as tall and she certainly didn't have her wings. However, her facial features did not change so she didn't dare to take things lightly. After some consideration, she decided to cover her face somehow.

After she made that decision, she looked around and casually took AYU's scarf. That was the only handy thing she could use to block her face for the time being. The latter was shocked by her action and immediately said, "Hey!"

"You're lucky that I'm not fussy," even though Lin Sanjiu said that, she couldn't hide the bit of disdain on her face. After she sniffed the scarf, she hesitantly wrapped it around the lower half of her face. She could smell a faint stench of meat. She frowned as she drew out her [ANTI Posthumans Collection: Female Slave Bondage Rope].

"Why are you taking that out again," Soulsqn's eyes widened. "We are currently working together to get what we individually want..."

Before she could finish her sentence, Lin Sanjiu tied the rope around Soulsqn's neck speedily in a well-practiced manner. This time around, Lin Sanjiu was more familiar with the use of the rope. With the help of her threatening wings, Lin Sanjiu also tied Soulsqn's hands and AYU's hands together. She was going to tie them together so she could literally walk them on a leash.

"We can only work together if we are on equal footing." After Lin Sanjiu had tied them up properly, she tugged the leather rope and was only satisfied when it didn't budge even with her strength. Soulsqn was tied to AYU's body and now looked like an exceptionally huge baby. "But, I am so much stronger than you guys. I can bring a greater advantage than what you can give me. Your best bet of reproducing lies with my friend. But, I don't necessarily need any of you Souls to kill someone. If I were you, I would just cooperate obediently."

The two Souls suddenly became very dejected.

"You, you aren't lying to me, right? You really know someone who is proficient in genetic engineering?" Soulsqn finally questioned Lin Sanjiu uneasily after quite some time.

"I don't only know her. I know her very well," Lin Sanjiu replied calmly. "She's called Nüwa. If she knew of your existence, she would definitely jump at the opportunity to meet you."

The last point was certainly true.

The two Souls kept quiet for some time before they finally let Lin Sanjiu pull them along like dogs. They did not hold the same values as humans so that wasn't something humiliating to them. They found it inconvenient but were not angry that they were treated in this manner. And, just like that, Lin Sanjiu continued her journey with the Souls on her leash.

A 1.8m person with a pair of 2m wings had her face hidden. She walked around with her slave, which was bounded like a strange bundle. To anyone out hunting for victims, that was a flashing warning sign. The few days they took to walk to the Free District were extremely peaceful.

Free District had a totally different atmosphere from Cyber District. Strictly speaking, Free District didn't have a distinct style. It became more and more apparent as they saw more and more buildings.

Technology in the apocalyptic world was mostly developed through Special Items and posthuman abilities. As Free District did not have a single administration, the place was constantly in an exceptionally chaotic state. When Lin Sanjiu saw the full view of the main bustling area within the entire zone, she couldn't help stopping to look at everything before her.

If God had mixed something wonderful, chaotic and dirty with a dash of dry breeze in one big bucket and then poured it out, it would become the Free District of Red Nautilus.

Under the bright afternoon sun, they could feel a warm breeze from the ground. In this apocalyptic city, riddled with corrosion, people of all sorts filled the streets. They brought along a sort of odd energy that brought this shell of a city back to life.

There was the smell of blood, food, steel, spices, and wine. The combination of these smells created a jolting scent. The noise of human conversations and the sound of machinery and music came from all corners of the city. From afar, the interwoven sounds were like a song. Above all, a loud clear rapping sound rang every hour, echoing through the entire city.

Despite spending a long time in the ocean, Soulsqn knew much more than Lin Sanjiu.

"That is the sound of the clock from Mokugyo Encyclopedic Forum," Soulsqn pointed out. As Soulsqn was tied to AYU's chest, they were easily mistaken as a person with two heads. Soulsqn seemed to be totally oblivious to the strange glances she was getting. As expected, she answered Lin Sanjiu's questions compliantly, "The mokugyo would sound during the Forum's opening hours. But, I am not sure what is it that they actually do."

" Forum?" Lin Sanjiu had not heard this word for quite a few years. She was extremely curious. If she wasn't as eager to meet her companions again, she would immediately check that place out.

When she looked at her map again, she was delighted. "Seagral Square and Mokugyo Encyclopedic Forum are adjacent to each other!" She remembered that Reno and Rena had told her to go to Seagral Square to retrieve the more information about their final meeting place. Likewise, while she was at Garden of Eden, B.Rabbit had also given her information about Sayo's base. Sayo's place was at least a one day's journey away from Seagral Square. After looking at their locations, Lin Sanjiu decided to look for the siblings first. However, she certainly didn't expect that when she came to Seagral Square, it was actually a tower.

Chapter 318: Smooth Sailing

Seagral Square wasn't tall. It had only three floors. However, it was massive and its design was complex. Lin Sanjiu spent ten minutes walking in a roundabout way before she came to the opposite side of the tower. She actually wanted to find for the main entrance but strangely Seagral Square wasn't designed with a main entrance. Its structure was a multistorey polyhedron made of multiple rhombus shapes. Lin Sanjiu could not figure out where the door was. From afar, the tower looked like three huge beehives stacked on each other.

She stood staring blankly at the building for almost half a minute before one of the rhombus shapes moved. Lin Sanjiu gasped, "Oh, so it works like this."

When one of the silver rhombi swung open, light reflected off its metallic surface. A man who wore his cap low peeked out and looked around, then leaped into the air from the top floor of the tower. He floated down to the ground like a feather. He shot a glance at Lin Sanjiu who was standing not far from him. Then, he quickly turned his head and disappeared into one of the alleys in the Free District.

As if something had been triggered, the other rhombus shapes coincidentally opened up one after the other. The metallic shapes shone under the sun like shimmering water. Several people of all shape and sizes popped out from the hive-like structure and all headed in different directions.

"Now I know why those two kids say Seagral Square is a good place to meet. It is difficult for someone to be tracked..." Lin Sanjiu sounded impressed. She walked up to the structure and choose a random rhombus. She pushed the metallic surface and the rhombus shifted inward revealing a gap wide enough for one person.

Somehow, the design of the building was really well-suited for people to meet inconspicuously.

Each floor of the tower was a polyhedron made of many rhombi. The top view of the structure seemed randomly designed, almost like a splashed water droplet. It was quite impossible to tell which rhombi a person entered the structure from and which they came out from. It was even difficult to tell the exact time they left the structure.

After the two Souls climbed inside after Lin Sanjiu with much difficulty, Lin Sanjiu pulled back her hand and the rhombus shape returned back to its original position.

The two Souls and Lin Sanjiu stood in the same spot for some time as they were amazed by what they saw.

The sound of a generator rumbled as an elevator headed upward creaking. There were numerous snake-like pipes above them. The huge pipes were connected haphazardly between floors. When they looked up, they could only see a small segment of the ceiling. The remaining portions of the ceiling were blocked by stairs, metal poles, corridors, platforms... It was like an extremely complicated maze lit by dim blue lights. Lin Sanjiu felt as though she had entered the interior of a gigantic precision machine.

"If a target you are chasing entered Seagral Square, your best option is to go back home and take a nap."

A voice suddenly rang out above Lin Sanjiu's head.

She was startled and quickly looked up. She found herself staring at a face covered with stubble. A man with messy hair was looking down at her from above.

The pipes had serial numbers and ventilation windows were spaced between segments. The person was peering from one of this ventilation windows, "This is a common saying here in Free District. From the looks of your face, this must be the first time

being here, eh? Haha! Have fun in Seagral Square!"

After that person said that, he disappeared before Lin Sanjiu could ask him a question.

"The humans here are rather fascinating. I've never been to a place like this," AYU remarked uncharacteristically to Soulsqn. She had not spoken since she had been captured by Lin Sanjiu.

Soulsqn acknowledged her with an "oh". Then, Soulsqn turned to Lin Sanjiu, "Hey, let me change into another body. I want to explore this place properly."

"I didn't use Nüwa to bait this Souls Queen just for her to have a fun sightseeing vacation," Lin Sanjiu ignored Soulsqn. She simply tugged on the black rope and made the Souls walk forward a few steps. She looked in front of her again and made the Souls follow her into the entrance of the nearest pipe.

When she was in Kisaragi Station, Rena said something to her, "Here. Remember this serial number 'JUNGLE-FL2-S147'. After you enter Seagral Square, look for this serial number. That is the meeting point Progressor Alliance uses. It is absolutely safe."

According to the signs in the pipe, Lin Sanjiu was currently in pipe "DIAMOND-FL1-P289". She walked and pondered over it. After asking a few passersby, she finally found out that "JUNGLE" referred to a particular sector. It was west of the DIAMOND sector. "FL2" meant that it was on the second floor. It was still some distance from where she was.

After making sense of her direction, Lin Sanjiu felt grounded even though she had turned back a couple of times because she was unfamiliar with the place. As she tried to make her way to the meeting point, she took the opportunity to observe the queerness of Seagral Square.

Unlike a maze, there wasn't any dead end. Every pipe and staircase, every fireman's pole and every elevator would lead a

person to a new spot. On one occasion, after she had climbed out of another pipe and stepped on a conveyor belt following the marked signs, she met another Free District resident. The person looked at her wide-eyed and stuttered, "Ah? There is another path there?"

He told her that though he had been making a living within Seagral Square for many years, he was only familiar with a particular sector.

The words "making a living" made an impression in Lin Sanjiu's mind.

Seagral Square's actual purpose wasn't just a confusing maze to lose one's pursuers. As Lin Sanjiu made her way to the meeting point, she had walked past almost a hundred rooms with various functions. There were shops with beckoning shop owners. There were also secret rooms which were guarded by professionals that blocked anyone attempting to enter. There were suspicious pink rooms which were scented with music playing in the background. There were also rooms filled with rows and rows of mailboxes.

When she finally reached Progressor Alliance's meeting point, four hours had passed.

She reached a platform with a small reception area. It was at the end of a pipe and wasn't that big. There were four rooms connected to this reception area and the rooms were each some distance away from each other. Lin Sanjiu entered the reception area and that quickly drew a few glances. However, after those people looked at her for a while, they averted their gaze.

"S147, I finally found you."

After wiping her perspiration, Lin Sanjiu took a deep breath before she strutted to the small closed door at the far end of the reception area. Without Rena and Reno's directions, Lin Sanjiu would never have imagined that the normal-looking little room belonged to the Progressor Alliance. After all, there wasn't even a sign. Lin Sanjiu did not know what lay beyond the door so she

hesitated and did not pull down her scarf.

However, before she could get closer, the door of S147 opened on its own without any warning. Lin Sanjiu instinctively stopped. The person who stepped out wasn't any of the siblings. It was a skinny young man in a checkered shirt. He appeared to be in his twenties but he wasn't much taller than Reno.

"That person is so small. You wouldn't mind me wearing him, right?" Soulsqn stuck her head out and asked Lin Sanjiu from behind.

"Shut up." Lin Sanjiu chided.

The man in a checkered shirt was holding a handful of red crystals. He seemed to be on his way out. When he looked up, he also spotted the strange-looking people not far from him.

When he saw Lin Sanjiu looking like she was uncertain whether to stay or leave, he suddenly called out hesitantly, "Are you 'Brain'?"

A person who would associate her with that word was definitely someone sent by the siblings!

The person was probably a Growth Type too. Lin Sanjiu relaxed and pulled down her scarf revealing a smile, "Did Reno and Rena asked you to wait for me here?"

"Yes. Why did you take such a long time? According to Reno, you were supposed to reach this place two weeks ago... Where were you when you first arrived here?" Checkered Shirt was quickly convinced of her identity, "You looked somewhat different from Reno's description."

"I came over from Cyber District. I am still not quite sure of many things..." Lin Sanjiu said as she approached Checkered Shirt. Before she finished her sentence, Soulsqn was persistent and interrupted, "Do you want me to be like this for all this time..."

Lin Sanjiu stopped and turned behind and threw a threatening

glare at Soulsqn.

Soulsqn looked around and finally kept quiet.

Checkered Shirt did not hear what Soulsqn said clearly. After he observed the two Souls for a bit and noticed that Lin Sanjiu wasn't willing to divulge anything, he did not ask her anything about them. "But that is to be expected... Reno and Rena would be excited to see you. After all, they have waited for you for a long time. I will bring you to the Progressor Alliance, I will explain things to you properly when we reach it.

"I haven't gotten your name," Lin Sanjiu nodded and said with a grin. She did not tell the man her own name just to be on the safe side. Secondly, she guessed that the man would have already known her name.

"I'm Muntjac Bai." Checkered Shirt replied before leading the way. There was a fireman's pole at the other end of the reception area. He clung on to the pole and slid down to one of the mezzanines below.

"By the way, did Reno and Rena find the cat doctor?"

"Cat doctor?" Muntjac Bai was the first to reach the ground. He looked up and saw Lin Sanjiu sliding down with the two Souls. His face was filled with confusion, "What cat doctor... No, I don't know about that matter."

From his reaction, Lin Sanjiu could tell that Meowie Hu was still wondering the streets.

When she landed, Lin Sanjiu couldn't help feeling a little worried. Since the siblings did not tell Muntjac about the cat doctor, she didn't continue with that line of conversation. She just picked up her walking pace and followed behind Muntjac. The skinny boy scuttled around like a rat familiar with his directions. It was very obvious that he knew where he should go. After going through various tunnels and pipes, they climbed up a flight of

stairs and found themselves standing in front of a rhombus shape.

There was a small standing platform at the end of the stairs which had only space for one person. As Muntjac was leading the way, he naturally was the first person to stand there. Lin Sanjiu waited at the steps of the stairs with her Souls.

He turned behind and looked at both Lin Sanjiu and the Souls. He hesitated for a few seconds and finally laughed, "I am exiting first. You have to follow very closely behind me."

After he said that, he pushed open the rhombus 'door' before he stepped out, he looked a little worried. Lin Sanjiu sprinted up the steps as the rhombus "door" shut again.

"I'm giving you a serious warning. You better not try anything funny when we reach the Progressor Alliance base," she glared at Soulsqn and said. "You better stop thinking about getting a new body to wear! If you dare to touch any of my friends, you can forget everything about your reproduction plan."

Soulsqn looked at Lin Sanjiu. She curled her lips and flashed a smile at Lin Sanjiu.

"Let's go," she looked at the rhombus "door". "That person would be anxious."

Chapter 319: Returning to Seagral Square

The sky had already turned dark. The last rays of the setting sun disappeared into the dark blue skies. Once the sun had gone down, a few hundred lights lit up within Free District. Different Posthumans have different abilities and items so they each used their own means to illuminate the place. Some of the lights were like a resplendent, shimmering river. Others were like dancing flames. When she looked across the dilapidated city, it was like a dreamscape.

When Lin Sanjiu found herself standing in front of a nondescript residential building, she turned behind her and shot a glance at Soulsqn who had been quiet.

Even though Soulsqn was still wearing the same old skin, as time passed, she began to look different from the blonde-haired Walter. Soulsqn had a peculiar aura which made people uncomfortable. She seemed to be able to express this aura despite the skin she was wearing. It gradually changed the body to a point that it was a little difficult for Lin Sanjiu to remember Walter's original face.

If Lin Sanjiu was honest, she was actually quite grateful.

"If you want to change your human skin," she whispered and tried her best so that Muntjac wouldn't hear her, "I have a few empty skins with me. You can wear them. When we enter the Progressor Alliance's base, you must not lay your hands on anyone."

After Marlon's ambush, Lin Sanjiu was still wary of Soulsqn.

If that thing was adamant about getting a new body, she could use her illusion ability on any of those Growth-type members. If that was the case, the threat they posed was going to be far greater than Marlon. With this in mind, Lin Sanjiu decided to just fulfill Soulsqn's wishes.

"You chopped off my legs. I need to absorb a living person before I can generate the corresponding limbs," Soulsqn laughed, "Even though I can enter another empty skin, it wouldn't make a difference."

"If that is the case, you can let AYU carry you forever." After Lin Sanjiu said that, she suddenly thought of something, "Oh, unless you meet my enemy."

As continued as she walked, "He had converted many living humans into marionettes. If you see him, maybe you can wear one of those bodies. I really don't know which of you is more disgusting..."

Soulsqn clicked her tongue behind Lin Sanjiu. Although Soulsqn had recently shown more human-like behaviors, it did not improve the impression Lin Sanjiu had about her. "They are wearable but unconsumable. If that is the case, it is more convenient to just use an empty human skin."

When Lin Sanjiu heard these words, she felt a warm night breeze on her face. She heard the sound of her hair rustling past her ears. Free District had a very comfortable climate at night, it was like an onsen.

However, Lin Sanjiu froze when she felt the hair on her back standing on end.

Progressor Alliance's short building was not far now. As she approached the building, she noticed that it was shoddily built. It was like someone had just stuck some wood and bricks together and made her wonder why it still had not collapsed. Muntjac Bai was just a few steps ahead of her. When he noticed that she had stopped, he was puzzled and turned behind to look at her.

Ignoring him, Lin Sanjiu turned behind and slowly narrowed her eyes and looked at Soulsqn, "How do you know that you can't absorb those puppets?"

The latter smiled again and gave her an unexpected answer, "I've seen them."

Lin Sanjiu heard soft footsteps approaching them.

Lin Sanjiu did not turn her head back, "Why didn't you tell me something like that earlier?"

"You didn't ask."

"Miss Lin, I forgot to ask you something. Who are your two friends?" Muntjac asked with a mild voice.

Before Lin Sanjiu could answer, she had already raised her skeletal wings slowly. The sharp bones sprawled open and blocked something. The thing hit her wings with a thud. It rolled off her wings and when she lowered her head, she saw a round ball.

The moment she saw it, her whole body reacted before she could even process her thoughts. Lin Sanjiu jumped upwards almost instinctively, thrusting her body upwards. It was only then that a thought flashed in her mind. She had seen that thing many times before in Kisaragi Station. It was a Ripple Sphere.

A loud explosion rang out behind her, as a warm blast of air rushed toward her. It was only then that she remembered something. She quickly pulled her black rope toward her. AYU who had been running crazily behind her managed to rush forward a few more meters with the additional momentum from Lin Sanjiu pulling the rope. Unfortunately, they were too close to the blast. They were caught by the strong gust of air and they were flung some distance away before landing heavily on the ground.

As Lin Sanjiu reacted quickly, her injuries weren't that bad. It was a different story for the other two Souls. They were only wearing humans suits. With that particular explosion, their human skins had become torn and tattered, revealing the red flesh underneath them. If the black rope didn't hold some of their skin together, they probably would even lose their human shapes.

A skinny silhouette emerged from the thick smoke and became clearer and clearer. Muntjac slowly walked out from the dust and embers. He looked at Lin Sanjiu and the other and was slightly surprised. The Souls were different from the other puppets he had previously seen, as they were very much alive.

"Huh?" he stared at the two Souls. "What are those?"

Lin Sanjiu panted as her face darkened. She climbed up from the ground. Amidst the smoke, an emotionless white face peered out from a window in the residential building.

Lin Sanjiu could feel the pit of her stomach churn a little as she asked with a hoarse voice, "Where are Reno and Rena?"

Progressor Alliance's meeting point in Seagral Square had obviously been raided by Puppeteer. If a person could figure out that meeting spot and also identify her as a 'Brain', the children had either joined the Puppeteer or something bad had already happened to them.

She did not know which answer was scarier.

However, Muntjac gave her a very vague answer, "They had been taken away by Father."

"Was he referring to Puppeteer? But, at least the two kids are still alive when they were brought away —" Just as that thought emerged, Muntjac made a gesture and suddenly expressionless faces appeared from all four corners of the alley they were on. Just like a nightmare, they walked toward them slowly and quietly. Their eyes were all on her.

If there were only two or three of them, Lin Sanjiu would have tried to fight them even if they still have their ability. However, one thing Puppeteer did not lack was puppets.

After she made a quick survey of her surroundings, she knew that there was at least a few dozen humanoid puppets. If each of them threw one Ripple Sphere, Lin Sanjiu would be blasted to bits. She

made a quick decision and before they could surround her, she pulled the Souls behind her and started to run.

The sound of footsteps rang out behind her immediately. Unlike the footsteps of normal people, those puppets' footsteps were extremely uniformed. Their feet would always fall on the same beat. Yet, it did not hinder them from moving quickly. They immediately chased up behind Lin Sanjiu.

"What are you waiting for? Use your illusion!"

Lin Sanjiu's voice was marred with a furious annoyance. She wanted to just stop and tear each of those puppets to shreds but her rationality told her that she must not even slow down for a moment. Lin Sanjiu was angry at herself because of her own incompetence. Her eyes became red, "I don't care if you use your reality or illusions. Just be quick!"

"Do you think I haven't tried!" Soulsqn screamed back at Lin Sanjiu as she wobbled in AYU's arms. "Look behind. Among those puppets, that Muntjac guy is the only one with a conscious mind. Illusions don't work on things that don't have their own minds!"

"Your illusions don't work! And, you can't even absorb those puppets!" Lin Sanjiu snapped as she sprinted. There was a murderous malice in her voice, "What is the point of keeping you guys alive?!"

It was only then that Soulsqn remembered that she could do nothing much to the woman in front of her.

"Wait. Wait. Wait!" When she yelled those words, Lin Sanjiu had already grabbed AYU's collar. The skeletal wings on her back loomed dangerously above them. If those sharp bones swooped down, the two Souls would be riddled with holes. "There is another method. AYU can emit her pheromones—"

Lin Sanjiu glared at them with a pair of menacing eyes without any sign of clemency, "They are puppets!"

"Yes. But, their bodies are organic. They are not made of plastic. If they are still organic—"

Before she could finish her sentence, Lin Sanjiu yelled, "Do it!"

AYU stopped immediately and twisted her body sharply to look behind her. As she moved too violently, the black rope tore a huge piece of skin from her body. Her lower jaw fell from her face down to the level around her collarbone. Lin Sanjiu spotted a faint, fleeting pink in AYU's mouth.

No visible gas was emitted. With Lin Sanjiu's naked eyes, nothing in the air around them had changed. However, when Lin Sanjiu slowed down and looked back, she spotted the few puppets who were about to touch AYU starting to fall down noisily like bowling pins.

It was as if they had been caught by an invisible net. The puppets were running so quickly before. Yet, they fell one after the other. As the puppets running at the front of the pack fell so suddenly, those behind could not stop in time. They were tripped by their fallen companions and all of them fell into a chaotic pile.

"Run! Our pheromones are precious. We only have a very limited amount. We are not going to be able to stop those puppets behind!" Soulsqn said. This time, AYU ran faster and pulled Lin Sanjiu behind her.

With that short distraction, Lin Sanjiu didn't feel as anxious. She looked around and her eyes suddenly lit up. "Here!" She immediately changed her direction. When one of the puppets manage to chase up to them, it could only watch blankly as the three targets disappeared behind a rhombus door belonging to Seagral Square.

Chapter 320: Wandering Around Seagral Square

The walls, pipes, and ceiling in Seagral Square were illuminated by blue light 24/7. Even though most of this place was lit, there were many spots which could not be illuminated. The weak blue light disappeared a few steps ahead from them. Lin Sanjiu stopped to catch her breath in the blind spot of this particular passageway. When she untied the two Souls, their ruined human suits lost all support and crumbled to the floor. Clearly, these lifeforms didn't have much stamina. After running behind Lin Sanjiu for just ten minutes, the grub-like creatures lay on the ground as if they were almost dying. They couldn't even say a word after a long time.

"I... I have lived so many years. I have taken over the bodies of many different... organisms," Soulsqn lifted her "head" and continued speaking through her multilayered mouth cavity, "This is the first time I feel so pathetic."

Soulsqn probably felt pathetic that she could not defeat Lin Sanjiu. When she wanted to run away, she could bear losing the opportunity that Lin Sanjiu offered. Yet, if she followed Lin Sanjiu, she had to endure these endless hardships.

Meanwhile, Lin Sanjiu wasn't even thinking about Soulsqn so she ignored that comment.

Ever since the first day of the apocalypse, Lin Sanjiu had already slowly acclimatized herself to this sort of unpredictable and chaotic lifestyle. As she was lost in thoughts, she unconsciously converted Walter's body into a card. Then, she took out a few of the skins she had previously kept.

The least she could do was to give Walter a proper burial.

When Soulsqn lay on the ground motionlessly, she looked a little better than when she was squirming around. She seemed to "eye"

Lin Sanjiu once before entering the replacement human suit. As the Souls travelled through different worlds, they realized the value of genetic engineering technology. Unlike evolved abilities, Lin Sanjiu certainly gained her wings through genetic modification. Considering many perspectives, what Lin Sanjiu could offer might really be the Souls' best hope.

No matter how many times Lin Sanjiu had witnessed that scene, she couldn't bear watching how the Souls filled up their human suits.

Lin Sanjiu sighed after seeing that AYU had finished filling her suit. AYU carried Souls again.

Even though it was common knowledge that Seagral Square was a pursuer's nightmare, quite a few persistent Puppets entered the tower. However, as Lin Sanjiu ran through the multiple complicated routes, she escaped the puppets after numerous turns. Lin Sanjiu had been listening for movements around them for quite some time, however, this section supported by steel frames remained silent.

To be on the safe side, Lin Sanjiu activated her [Higher Consciousness Scan].

"Huh?" she was stunned when she looked at the place through the lens of her ability.

This particular blind spot they were at was much larger than she expected. They were at the outer portion of the section behind a wall. There was still quite a lot of space past the wall. Lin Sanjiu wasn't startled by this, the reason she was hesitant was actually because of those rows and rows of large containers nearby.

They were like those large garbage collection bins. Each of the green containers had wheels and a cover. Some of the covers weren't shut properly so she could see the black shadows of the things that were in them. When she walked over to take a closer look, she was dumbfounded.

She could make out the words "Corpse Disposal Point" in the dimly lit area. She almost wondered if she had misread those words. When she looked down, she realized that the thing that was sticking out from the bin was actually a human's foot.

"Seagral Square... sure provides some great customer service."

Lin Sanjiu did not know how to react. She crossed her arms and stood in the same spot, thinking. She could barely detect the stench of rotting flesh. This would mean that people would periodically remove these bodies...

Meanwhile, the two Souls who followed behind her sauntered over.

"Ah? There are so many bodies here. They just throw them away like this?" Soulsqn, who now had a different face, commented as she sat in AYU's arms. "It is such a waste."

"Why? Can you absorb dead bodies?" Lin Sanjiu shot a sidelong glance at Soulsqn. She didn't mind letting Soulsqn consume dead bodies.

Much to her disgust, the creature was very picky. "If it is a fresh corpse, I don't mind... But, these people have already died for some time. Alright, why don't you open the bin and let me see if there is any suitable corpse? The situation is different after all. You won't want me to be a burden, right?"

Lin Sanjiu had chopped off Soulsqn's legs partially out of revenge and also to better control that creature. However, considering the situation they were in, it didn't make much difference whether Soulsqn had her legs. Even though Lin Sanjiu did not want to admit that the creature was right, she opened a few of the bins.

Dead people of all assortment were piled on top of each other. Their dead bodies showed no sign of life. The bodies at the very bottom of the bins had started to stink. Some of the bodies were intact so they looked as though they were sleeping. Others had

fatal wounds on their bodies. There were even some that were just dismembered body parts.

Lin Sanjiu walked around aimlessly looking at the dead bodies of many strangers before she suddenly heard a slurping sound. She instantly felt goosebumps all over her body. When she heard that sound, she immediately recognized what it was. At that time, she didn't know what it meant but now Lin Sanjiu was very clear what it was. When she turned around, the human skin that Soulsqn was previously wearing was now slumped on the ground. A pretty and slim girl with two ponytails was now standing beside AYU. She was arranging her face. The original owner of the body looked no older than fifteen. Her two slender legs under her purple dress were serving Soulsqn well.

"This was the freshest." When Soulsqn saw Lin Sanjiu frowning, she thought the woman was unhappy with something else. She blinked her deep black eyes and said, "Don't worry. What we wear doesn't affect our ability."

Soulsqn's ability to adapt was clearly far superior to the other Souls. After a short while, she already looked more and more like a normal human. Just for assurance, Lin Sanjiu bound both Souls' necks with her black leather rope and continue leashing them around. She wouldn't say it would stop them from doing anything funny but at least she could keep them within sight.

At least, they solved one problem. Lin Sanjiu found it quite a stroke of luck too. After thinking for some time, she converted all the skins she had collected, except Walter's, back to their original form. Then, she placed them in an empty bin.

She actually still had two bodies which she had not buried. One was Ren Nan's and the other was Er Dao's. When things settled, she planned to find a place to bury all of them.

After they got out of that small area, Lin Sanjiu made an effort to remember the serial number of that sector.

"From the looks of it, your kinspeople have high regards for Soulsqn." After they ditched the puppets, the three people slowed down. Lin Sanjiu looked around as she continued walking. After she brought this up, she had a sudden thought, "Since you are caught by me, why do they still treat you as their leader?"

She pointed to AYU, "Take her for example. Why didn't she just abandon you and leave? Wouldn't that be easier?"

The teenage girl showed a very disconcerting expression. Lin Sanjiu couldn't pinpoint what was exactly wrong with it. "I am biologically determined as their Queen. It isn't political. I can't believe you didn't figure that out."

Lin Sanjiu certainly figured that out long ago. After she got the answer she expected, she couldn't help smiling at Soulsqn. While Soulsqn was distracted, Lin Sanjiu quickly added, "Since you have confirmed that... I thought of an idea to deal with them."

Soulsqn quickly kept quiet and narrowed her eyes as she waited to listen to Lin Sanjiu's idea.

"Should I call you bold or stupid?" After Lin Sanjiu concluded that sentence, Soulsqn's eyes darted all over Lin Sanjiu's body. She had many thoughts and wanted to say more but Soulsqn finally said, "I'll have you know. If I decide to do something, you might not maintain your dominance over us."

"I know."

"You trust us?"

"Of course I don't." Lin Sanjiu replied. No matter how much time had passed, Lin Sanjiu would always be wary of Soulsqn. However, she didn't say anything more than that.

"You're honest," Soulsqn winced her face which lacked the authenticity of youth. Lin Sanjiu wasn't sure if that was a

compliment. "Actually, you don't need to threaten me with my life. As long as you provide a little deposit, I will be very cooperative."

Lin Sanjiu raised one of her brows.

"What deposit?"

"I need to know that your so-called friend exist," Soulsqn said slowly. "I also need to know that you can convince her to help us."

This matter wasn't that simple. Even though Lin Sanjiu knew that Nüwa would certainly be very interested to meet such a species of sentinel beings, how was she going to prove that Nüwa's existed? Lin Sanjiu didn't even know where that woman was now.

After contemplating for some time, she suddenly had an idea.

"There is a certain shortcut I can take to prove to you that she is real," Lin Sanjiu's furrowed her brows. "But, I need to reveal something about one of my abilities before I can do that... I can't show you while we are walking. When we find a place to rest, I will show you."

Lin Sanjiu was, in fact, talking about her [Consciousness Mimicry].

Without knowing, it had already been more than a year since she last used that ability. But each time Lin Sanjiu recalled her memories about Nüwa, she would remember her icy smile which came with a hint of strange pity. It was as if it was carved into her mind. After confirming with Mrs. Manas that she had sufficient Higher Consciousness in her "reserve", they came to a fork with a direction sign.

Not all routes in Seagral Square were marked. It was as if the designer had a firm belief that a person had to lose their way before they could actually escape their pursuers. Following the sign, Lin Sanjiu found a column of rooms along the side of an elevator. They used the elevator to reach one of the rooms. After inserting some red crystal, they could buy the rights to occupy the

room for a period of time.

Lin Sanjiu inserted the last five middle-sized red crystal and bought a fifteen-minute slot for them.

"Is fifteen minutes enough?" Soulsqn had her misgivings after Lin Sanjiu dragged her into the small metallic room. Both AYU and herself stood in the middle of the room as she watched the door closing before them.

"What is your ability—" Soulsqn turned to Lin Sanjiu and asked.

Before she could finish her sentence, she stopped speaking.

The woman who looked the same as before was smiling at them. She wasn't far from them. The woman had a look as if she had waited for them for a very, very long time.

Chapter 321: A Normal Working Day

When her Higher consciousness ebbed away like a tide, Lin Sanjiu felt as if something had been drawn from her body. Lin Sanjiu's body shivered as she slowly opened her own eyes. The perspiration on her body had soaked her clothes. She sighed and her limbs felt weak. This feeling wasn't foreign to her. Even though she made sure that she had enough Higher Consciousness to sustain that state, [Consciousness Mimicry] was simply a very draining ability.

"If these two Souls tried anything while I'm in this weakened state..." When she thought of this, she looked up and saw Soulsqn.

She was startled.

The teenager with two ponytails sitting in a slump on the floor. She sat motionless on the ground with a blank look. It was as if her human suit was also turning white. Lin Sanjiu found her staring and she could sense the creature's shock even through that human skin.

Behind her, AYU was lying beside Soulsqn. It had been removed itself from its human suit and was in its fleshy form. There was an opening in its frontal part of its body. Lin Sanjiu could see her layers of flesh and white colored tendons mixed with slimy mucus from the opening. The room was filled with an anxious hissing sound. From the looks of it, AYU was making those sounds.

When Lin Sanjiu looked down, she saw a drop of mucus on the tip of her fingernail. She lifted her left hand and somehow caught a drop of slime dripping from her fingertip.

"I... I know." Soulsqn's voice was so muffled that Lin Sanjiu nearly couldn't make out what she was saying. "I know. I know..." She mumbled over and over again.

Soulsqn only let out a sigh of relief when she realized that there

was a familiar wariness in Lin Sanjiu's amber eyes.

"Has your... friend left?" she asked while she climbed up from the floor with some effort. She didn't look at AYU, "Is... this your ability? You can use your body as a medium to communicate with your friend?"

This was a convenient misunderstanding Lin Sanjiu did not expect and she definitely wasn't going to explain herself.

Unlike a "possession", Lin Sanjiu retained her awareness when she was using her [Consciousness Mimicry]. Her own consciousness would take the backseat when she used the ability and she just let the Nüwa's mimic take over. With her [Consciousness Mimicry] deactivated, the memories of what had happened returned to her mind. Lin Sanjiu couldn't help shuddering and quickly wiped the mucus on her finger with the fabric of her pants.

"How was it?" Lin Sanjiu asked. She intentionally showed an expressionless face.

"I... I believe you." Soulsqn bent down and picked AYU. Lin Sanjiu didn't know if she was mistaken but Soulsqn seemed to be trembling non-stop. Lin Sanjiu couldn't tell if Soulsqn was trembling from fear or excitement. "How is she... right now?"

"Didn't I tell you? She is alright. She will be fine after a while." In that short time, the mimicked version of Nüwa was indeed very interested to know more about the Souls. She was so interested that she cut open AYU, who was their carrier, on the spot just to examine the creature's inner structure.

"She had just been examined, her organs aren't hurt," Lin Sanjiu explained. After thinking for a bit, she added something Nüwa definitely wouldn't say, "Get her to wear her human suit again. She looks terrible."

AYU, who had been hissing non-stop, seemed unable to move

about freely. After she heard what Lin Sanjiu said, she struggled in Soulsqn hand and fell to the floor. Then, she crawled back into her human skin.

Even though Lin Sanjiu bought that fifteen-minute slot, they still had some time left when they stepped out of the room. Lin Sanjiu wasn't quite sure why but she felt that when she mimicked Nüwa just moments ago, it left a strong lasting impression on her. She felt as if she acted even more like Nüwa than before. As she held the black rope in her hand, she wandered into a pipe. She listened to the quiet footsteps of the Souls behind her as she asked Mrs. Manas about that issue.

"That is no surprise."

Lin Sanjiu did not expect that Mrs. Manas would answer her that way. "Have you forgotten? Nüwa's consciousness is contained in a small segment of your genetic makeup. A person's higher consciousness stems from their psyche. With a small bit of her psyche in you, your mimicry state would definitely be different. With that, you don't even have to use as much higher consciousness to maintain that state..."

"Is it alright to just leave her higher consciousness in my body? Wouldn't it cause any problems?"

"I don't know," Mrs. Manas said callously. "What could you do even if you knew? Anyway, you have no means of removing her higher consciousness now."

Lin Sanjiu felt an immediate urge to sigh.

Honestly speaking, if she had a choice, she wished she could just shake hands and make peace with Nüwa. But, that wasn't right either. Nüwa didn't treat her as any ordinary enemy.

While she was entertaining her random thoughts, they had reached one of the rhombus doors. Lin Sanjiu untied AYU's neck and nodded to Soulsqn.

AYU seemed to receive Soulsqn's command without any words. She looked back at her queen before turning to look at Lin Sanjiu with a doubtful expression. After that, she crouched and exited from the rhombus door.

There might be puppets waiting outside for them but AYU had already changed her appearance so it wouldn't be a problem even if she just walked in front of them.

"What a petty man. It had been two years and he still holds a grudge against me because of that small matter." Lin Sanjiu complained to Mrs. Manas and asked, "Is there any way I can keep my wings. They are really too conspicuous."

"Theoretically, it shouldn't be impossible," Mrs. Manas gave her a rather reserved answer. Lin Sanjiu was waiting for her to elaborate when she heard Soulsqn speaking, "What should we do next?"

"We will wait here for AYU to return," she immediately replied. "I can only take action then."

However, it was quite obvious that Soulsqn still wanted to say something more. After a few seconds of silence, she spoke. "I have to admit that your friend is really our best hope, but there is another problem..."

"What's the problem?"

"You humans will change worlds every 14 months. You mentioned that you will look for your friend... But, how are you going to bring me along?"

Lin Sanjiu was speechless. She had always been dangling that hope in front of Soulsqn like a carrot on a stick. She only wanted to control the Souls but she had never really given it much thought. She had never really considered about this question. However, if she couldn't provide a solution now, this "collaboration" with the Souls would be a very unstable one. Lin Sanjiu's [Planar World] only worked on non-living things. The Souls were like humans so

she didn't know if they could actually use a visa.

But, if that was the case, how did Nüwa bring her "Sages" around?

"Look, let's look for a Consular Officer," Lin Sanjiu didn't want to keep quiet for such a long time in front of Soulsqn, "They should know what to do."

Actually, Lin Sanjiu was only half-confident in what she had just said. But, Soulsqn was clearly unfamiliar with the functions of a Consular Officer so she was quite easy to fool. After that, Soulsqn followed her obediently.

Considering what she had to do, AYU probably needed more than ten days before she could come back to them. Lin Sanjiu knew she had to do something during these few days. After a discussion with Mrs. Manas, Lin Sanjiu decided to try to earn some red crystals. She wanted to rent a room and just spend some time properly experimenting with how she could deal with her wings.

When she thought about how she was going to earn those red crystals, she couldn't help wanting to sigh. She thought back about the fresh painful memories of how hard it was for her to get enough red crystals for an airship ticket in Cyber District and knew she would have to confront the problem of earning some money once again...

Unexpectedly, earning a living within Seagral Square wasn't as hard as she had imagined.

"From a certain perspective, the apocalyptic worlds which have not repaired their civilization have it pretty good. At least, you don't have to worry about money..." Lin Sanjiu grumbled to Mrs. Manas.

Meanwhile, she was holding a piece of a crudely drawn map which showed a part of the sector. She stretched her neck out to see if there were any passersby on the nearby traveller.

Lin Sanjiu successfully found a "job" the second day after AYU left. Unfortunately, it was a really low-paying job. She had even sent Soulsqn out to work but they only earned ten middle-sized crystals after a few days.

After Soulsqn met her mimicked Nüwa once, the creature just wouldn't leave Lin Sanjiu alone. The situation was so bad that Soulsqn would come back to look for Lin Sanjiu after a period of time just to check that she was around. It was as if she was super afraid that she might lose Lin Sanjiu.

Lin Sanjiu massaged her own neck. Then, she heard the traveller humming to life again. She sighed quietly and dragged herself to greet the person who was approaching.

When she saw that the person was a sweating plump man, she couldn't help rejoicing. When she was about a meter away from him, she stopped and greeted him, "Hello! Are you hungry right now? There is a 'Neverending Fried Rice Fountain' just right upstairs—"

Noticing that the person who greeted him wasn't a threat, the plump man squinted. He looked down at the directions on the map that Lin Sanjiu was holding. There was a bowl drawn on that paper. "Oh," he remarked, "It doesn't seem far! Alright, I will go take a look later."

She had just gotten another customer.

Lin Sanjiu watched as the plump man left. She exhaled. This particular "Fried Rice Shop" was just something another posthuman had created with his own Special Item. The shop only offered fried rice and nothing else. Her boss was very stingy with his red crystals but was very generous with his fried rice. Her meals over these few days were pretty much settled with the shop's own specialty. At least, she wasn't hungry.

Lin Sanjiu heard the traveller operating again. She prepared her map and was just about to greet the next person when she saw

a girl with two ponytails coming up to her.

"Why are you back here?"

Soulsqn did not reply to her immediately. She ran up to Lin Sanjiu with another crumpled map in her hand.

"When I was at another sector, I met a group of humans. They asked me if I had seen a tall woman with skeletal wings—"

Lin Sanjiu was shocked, "Are they humans or puppets?"

"They are humans," Soulsqn replied as she turned to look behind her. It was as though she was afraid that those posthumans had followed her. "They are looking for you. What do you plan to do?"

"If they are looking for me during this critical period, they're probably up to no good." Lin Sanjiu thought to herself. She narrowed her eyes, "I told you not to harm any other humans. Did you do anything to them?"

"No. I didn't. I don't need any human skins right now," Soulsqn said a little defensively. "Anyway, their group was too big."

After getting the answer she wanted, Lin Sanjiu smiled. She rolled the map in her hand and tossed it aside.

"Okay, I'll wait for them here."

Chapter 322: If Getting a Job Doesn't Work Out, Go For Plan B

Even though Lin Sanjiu knew it wasn't quite right, she couldn't help feeling a little proud of herself as she stood on a crossbeam.

After she evolved, she had only been through three worlds. Through her conversations with Reno and Rena, she knew that based on Twelve Worlds Centrum's standard, she was basically just a slightly more experienced newbie. However, being a Growth Type was like having an acceleration. She grew stronger every minute, even if it was little by little. Within these three to four years, her strength slowly accumulated. Now, Lin Sanjiu's combat capabilities far exceeded the other posthumans who evolved around the same time as her.

"None of these ten plus people is a threat to me, individually." She narrowed her eyes as she looked down at the group of posthumans walking beneath her. "Just to be safe, other than those two or three people walking in front, you can just choose anyone."

All the posthumans in that group looked more experienced than Lin Sanjiu, however, based on the combat capabilities they were displaying, she wasn't impressed.

After Soulsqn heard what she said, she bent her head forward and looked down. When she did that, it was quite obvious that it was wearing an empty human skin. Tilting her head downward, that motion stretched the skin at her neck. A vertebrae of her spine slipped outward. It looked extremely off but Soulsqn did not notice, "It... isn't going to be easy."

"I thought you could create illusions?"

"That isn't the problem. My illusion have an area effect. If I use my illusion ability, it would definitely not just affect one person.

Can I stop three people for you?"

"No." Lin Sanjiu frowned as she watched the people in the group like she was picking out groceries at a market. She followed them stealthily. "If they lose three people from their group, it would be too obvious. It will also be difficult for me to control them."

Just when the human and Soul suddenly became silent, not knowing what to do next, a man in a red jacket suddenly said something to the person beside him. After that, he left the group by himself and went to one side and crouched down.

"Well, isn't this a godsent scenario. We just get what we want!"

"Target him!" Lin Sanjiu's eyes beamed as she shoved Soulsqn a little. The latter did not hesitate. She made a gesture with her arm and the unlucky man who was tying his shoelaces suddenly froze. His fingers stopped moving. The man slowly turned his head after a few long seconds. He seemed very confused as he looked around, it was as if he didn't know where he was.

The other posthumans in the group did not seem to notice anything amiss. Under the dim blue light, they walked further and further from him. They quietly disappeared in the darkness in the distance. The man in the red jacket was left standing alone. He stood in the same spot, disoriented. After some time, he suddenly plopped down on the floor and sat down. He opened his mouth wide. It was obvious that he wasn't aware that his companions had already left him.

"Did you make him become a retard?" Lin Sanjiu slid down a fireman's pole. When she landed beside the man in the red jacket, she almost didn't make any sound. She shot a glance at the vague silhouettes of the group of people that had just left before saying softly, "I still want to ask him some questions."

"My ability doesn't have that effect," Soulsqn looked at Lin Sanjiu expressionlessly. "Otherwise, you'd be a retard long ago."

Lin Sanjiu snapped her fingers right in front of the man.

He was in his twenties. From his outward appearance, he was the perfect stereotypical model for an apocalyptic world. There were small little stains all over his red technical jacket. His jacket was dirty and wrinkled, it also had a sour stench. His messy, matted hair looked as if it had not been washed for at least half a month. A pair of unfocused eyes amidst his bushy-bearded, skinny face looked back at Lin Sanjiu.

Seeing that he wasn't going to regain his sobriety that quickly, Lin Sanjiu took out her [ANTI Posthumans Collection: Female Slave Bondage Rope] and tied his hands together, feeling a sense of satisfaction. Compared to the slippery Souls, humans were much easier to tie up.

Thanks to her job in Seagral Square, Lin Sanjiu had gotten familiar with this particular sector over the past few days. She knew all the more secluded walkways and mezzanines on the top of her head because the owner of "Neverending Fried Rice Fountain" had told her not to loiter at those spots because she would not meet any passersby there.

Lin Sanjiu pushed the man into an elevator with them. After making a few turns, she and Soulsqn brought the man to a narrow corridor which connected two mezzanines. They were very familiar with the route they took.

Soulsqn withdrew her illusion and the unlucky fellow blinked his eyes as if he had just woken up. With that daze in his eyes, he looked a little stupid.

"Erm. Who are you? I—" Just as he spoke, he suddenly stopped as if his words were stuck in his throat. He widened his small eyes and looked up. He stared gapingly at the woman in front of him.

The woman was taller than him by a few inches. Her amber eyes showed a hard coldness. Behind her, there were two large shadows. Even though they appeared blue due to the light, that did

nothing to reduce their menacing presence.

The man's shock quite receded, and it was replaced by confusion.

"Miss, who are you? Why am I here?" he gulped and asked with a parched voice, "Have you seen my friends—"

"Stop acting," Lin Sanjiu glared at him coldly. She crossed her arms in front of her and signaled at Soulsqn with her eyes. Soulsqn walked behind the man and blocked his path. The man licked his lips very quickly before he fell into an uneasy silence.

"I know you guys are searching for me." Lin Sanjiu knew that when she didn't show any expression, she could look very domineering. "Who are you people?"

The man's eyes darted. He seemed to be judging his current situation. It didn't take much time. When Lin Sanjiu's wings swooshed open, the unlucky man immediately made a decision. "Hey, hey. Since you already know about it, I won't hide anything from you. We formed this team just for this mission. Two days ago we didn't even know each other."

"Mission?" Lin Sanjiu narrowed her eyes, "What mission?"

"It's like that... I will tell you everything, but don't make things difficult for me." The man sighed and was resigned to his predicament. "That day, I just wanted to go to the forum to search for some information. But, there was a commotion. I asked around and found out that someone had posted a mission. The person was offering a significant reward to look for a woman with skeletal wings."

After he said that, he looked at Lin Sanjiu hesitantly. "The requestor only provided the woman's height and added the detail that she had skeletal wings. He did not describe his target further. There wasn't any description about her appearance or ability type. The only other detail was that she was last seen in Seagral Square. As the reward was quite good, we felt that this mission wasn't as

simple as it seemed. In the end, we formed an ad-hoc team and headed to Seagral Square."

"Who was the requestor?"

"I don't know. People use pseudonyms in the forum! The only thing I know is that we will get the reward once we bring the target to the designated location."

Lin Sanjiu couldn't help feeling a little distracted from the main conversation, "When you mentioned forum, are you talking about Mokugyo Encyclopedic Forum?"

"Obviously, there is no other forum, is there?" After saying that, the man realized he wasn't showing the best attitude. He eyed Lin Sanjiu cautiously and realized that she didn't seem to mind. He let out a sigh of relief.

"This forum..." Lin Sanjiu frowned and thought for a while. Then, she asked, "What sort of place is it? What can you do there?"

After she asked that question, the man suddenly looked at her as if he suddenly understood her situation better. "You are not a resident of the Twelve Worlds Centrum. Um... um. It is alright. There is a first time for everyone. Just as its name implies, the forum is a place where people gather information about apocalyptic worlds. You can search and collate the information you need. You can also make announcements, post missions, etc. In summary, you can do a lot there."

Lin Sanjiu was dumbfounded by the description as she recalled the repetitive hollow Mokugyo sounds she had heard in the past.

"Look. I came here to look for you after accepting the mission. I didn't expect that it was beyond my capabilities and I would end up captured by you instead." It seemed like this wasn't the first time this man had ended up in such a situation. After he observed Lin Sanjiu's reaction, he quickly changed his attitude, "We all just want to survive. We don't have to be merciless... Look. I can bring you to

Mokugyo Forum. If you are unsure about anything, you can just ask me. You can treat it as my form of apology to you, okay?"

Even though the woman confronting him looked powerful, it was apparent that this was her first time here in Red Nautilus. To him, that information was just common knowledge but for someone foreign to this place, it took on a whole other meaning.

"You plan to bring me to the place where you received your mission?" Lin Sanjiu let out a dry laugh after eyeing him. "Do you think I'm stupid?"

"Oh god," the man remarked. He quickly explained, "You can change your appearance. You can even hide your wings. You just need the right Special Items! Besides, the most dangerous place is also the safest. The person that posted that message would never suspect that you would be right there at the forum..."

"What he said makes sense," Lin Sanji muttered to herself.

A matter had been troubling her these few days and she didn't know what to do about it. But something the man said about the forum caught her attention. If she was lucky, she might be able to solve that problem. After contemplating, she finally spoke, "Is this forum very popular? Is it the first place people think of when they want to get information?"

"Of course!" the man in the red jacket nodded profusely.

"But... I don't have any Special Items that can change my appearance."

"That's nothing. There is a shop on the third floor of Seagral Square. They specialize in selling single-use 'masks' that last for an hour. After you wear that, I can guarantee you that not even your parents will recognize you."

"Oh," Lin Sanjiu replied and nodded as she lamented inwardly about the value of information. If the man didn't say that, she would never know...

After the man had already shown his hand, he didn't receive a proper answer so he was a little unsure if it worked. He was only 1.75m. As he watched the woman looking down at him, his heart raced nervously. Surprisingly, the other party suddenly smiled and immediately looked very friendly.

"I still haven't got your name. What's your name?"

"My... my hometown is a little backward. I'm Honeysuckle," the man in the red jacket disliked that question but he answered her.

The next second, the woman in front of him suddenly bent over. Following which, he felt someone grip his ankle.

His world spun upside down and all his blood rushed to his head.

"Ahhh!" Honeysuckle screamed in horror as Lin Sanjiu grabbed him by his ankle and laughed.

"I'm sorry. I don't have any money so I need to borrow some from you."

She shook him violently and the man's red crystals fell noisily to the floor.

Chapter 323: The Journey To The Encyclopedic Forum 1

At the Northwest corner, on the third floor of Seagral Square, one would find a small door covered with rust after climbing through multiple pipes and climbing up many flights of stairs. The rust was so bad that no one could tell its original color. The "Under Maintenance" sign hanging from the door handle was covered with such a thick layer of dust that it was almost difficult to read the words on the sign.

A tall, handsome young man with black hair wearing a long coat signaled to the people behind him with a nod. A girl immediately ran up and held the handle. The door made a long creak as if it had not been opened for a long time as the door opened stiffly.

The dust on the part of the handle which had been touched did not move or change a little. It was as if it had been glued there. When another girl saw that the door had opened, she crept to the door and peeked behind it suspiciously. The girl that opened the door had two ponytails. Meanwhile, the other girl peeking through the door looked like her sister. They seemed to be about the same age and both of them were very skinny. Their arms were so skinny that they looked like they would break anytime, they looked as if they had not eaten for days.

When she took the first step forward, she tugged the black rope in her hand. Oddly, though she looked like she did not have even a hint of muscle, the young man was tugged forward by the momentum. Underneath his coat, the black rope was tied to him. He had no choice but to follow quickly behind her. Behind the door was a windowless tubular corridor. The tasteless wallpaper that covered the corridor was in tatters. The corridor was so quiet that it was as though it had been cut off from the world. Each step they took was followed by a soft poof as dust stirred. Under the dim

light, they could see a similar door in a distance.

"If we exit from here, we will reach Mokugyo Encyclopedic Forum?"

Lin Sanjiu, who now looked like a skinny teenager, did not sound even one bit threatening though she tried to intentionally deepen her voice, especially not after she coughed a few times because of the dust.

Yet, the young black-haired man, Honeysuckle, did not dare to take her lightly.

The [Mask] they were wearing was just a sort of illusion tool. It didn't change the actual appearance of its user. Even though Honeysuckle, who was only 1.75m, looked tall and handsome now, he couldn't touch the hanging lamps from the ceiling even if he tiptoed.

Similarly, though other people might not be able to see Lin Sanjiu's menacing wings, they were still on her back. If an unlucky person accidentally bumped into them, they would still get injured.

To avoid that sort of situation, Honeysuckle and Soulsqn had to stay very close to Lin Sanjiu so that other innocent passersby would not come too close to her.

Honeysuckle was a person with a lot of experience and was very adaptable. He knew when he could assert himself and when he had to submit. Ever since Lin Sanjiu grabbed him by his ankle and took all his money, he did not show even a single sign of defiance. After all, it was very obvious that he couldn't defeat her.

"Mokugyo Encyclopedic Forum is just behind this door," Honeysuckle said eagerly when Lin Sanjiu held the door handle. "There might be a lot of dust but many people know this route."

"Oh." Lin Sanjiu responded. She pulled the door open with some hesitation.

She found herself staring at a whole different world when the door opened.

She was enveloped by a wave of warm air when she took the first step into the building. The place was warm because of the heat generated by the crowd. A cacophony of human conversations assaulted her ears as the bright light flooded her vision. Lin Sanjiu looked away from the platform nearby and took a sweeping glance at the countless large monitor screens arranged in rows. She froze for half a second before realizing that she was on an upper platform.

"Here's the stairs," Honeysuckle pointed out as if he was afraid that she couldn't spot them herself. "My dear mother, please be careful when you are walking down the stairs. It's steep."

Lin Sanjiu wanted to give him two tight slaps but she didn't do that after considering her current disguise. Mokugyo Encyclopedic Forum was far larger than what she had imagined. After she walked down from the long flight of stairs, Lin Sanjiu found herself standing in a hall so large that she could barely see its far end. The ceilings were so high that they were hidden in the shadows where the lights couldn't reach. There were small rooms lining two sides of the hall. They were arranged in a sort of picturesque disorder which gave the hall a very interesting shape. When she looked at the middle of the hall, it reminded her of the floor at the New York Stock Exchange in her homeworld.

The large screen monitors were hung slightly higher than a person's average height. There were a few hundred of them and they were placed in very neat rows. There were many posthumans gathering in front of each of these large screens. The spaces between the large monitor screens were filled by an extraordinary number of smaller monitors that were consoles for the individual user. At that moment, many of the consoles were in use. The lights from their screens lit the face of the hundreds of users.

Lin Sanjiu wandered along the aisle and felt almost overwhelmed

by what she was seeing.

"The large screen display announcements from the Twelve Worlds," Honeysuckle pointed to the screen closest to Lin Sanjiu. Before someone else could see that his hands were tied, he quickly placed them down again. "For example, the announcements can range from people offering item exchanges, posting questions about the current statuses of Consular Officers, challenging enemies to a duel... I found the mission here.

Lin Sanjiu shot a quick glance at Honeysuckle before shifting her gaze from the crowd to one of the screens just in time to see an announcement message: "Looking for another Consular Officer to partner. My Consular Officer ability is already at Level 3..."

The message flashed for a few rounds before it disappeared. Lin Sanjiu was filled with fascination as she followed Honeysuckle deeper into the hall.

"The messages on the large screens have been categorized. Depending on the information you are interested in, you can watch the corresponding screens." Honeysuckle gave a brief explanation and brought Lin Sanjiu to an individual console one corner of the hall. Each small screen was placed in a sort of case so that it could provide the user some privacy.

"There are many more of these individual consoles." Honeysuckle looked at the case and smiled, "You can make inquiries, publish information... You can do anything. I would come over occasionally to input new information and earn a little extra income."

When he mentioned the words "extra income", he couldn't resist looking at the small pouch in Lin Sanjiu's hand with a slightly pained expression.

"Input new information?" That immediately caught Lin Sanjiu's interest. "What kind of information is marketable?"

"All the worlds in the Twelve Worlds Centrum share a common database system." Honeysuckle looked a little proud as he said that, "It is a remarkable system. Each time you leave an apocalyptic world, you can add new information about that world to this database. You can earn a corresponding amount of red crystals based on the value of your information. The next time another person wants to find out more information about that next destination, they can spend a bit of money and read the information that you have added."

"He is right! This is an incredible invention." Lin Sanjiu was very impressed. She suddenly understood how Reno and Rena got their information about Kisaragi Station. No matter how powerful Progressor Alliance was, it wasn't possible for them to know which posthumans have been to Kisaragi Station. With this system, information about the different worlds can be collated efficiently. This was also the reason why residents of the Twelve Worlds Centrum were so resourceful!

"Can I look up information on matters within the Twelve Worlds?" Lin Sanjiu walked over to the screen and pressed it a few times, feeling a little lost. "For example, if I want to know more about the Munition Factory, do I just search for the term Munition Factory?"

"Oh. Yes. You just have to spend some red crystals... Depending on the information, they all have different prices." After he said that, Honeysuckle took a handful of red crystals—which belonged to him originally—and threw them into a tray at the bottom of the console reluctantly.

The small tray slowly slid into the console and the small screen lit up as if it suddenly came to life. The light moved around in a fluid-like manner which reminded Lin Sanjiu of her [Ability Polishing Agent].

"You make your choices here. Then, you make your input here..." Honeysuckle taught Lin Sanjiu some of the basic functions of the

console. After Lin Sanjiu was familiar with the interface, Soulsqn brought him away from the console so that Lin Sanjiu could have some privacy.

Lin Sanjiu watched their backs as they left. Seeing that Soulqn was playing her part well, Lin Sanjiu returned to the screen.

There was a red numeral "7" at the right corner of the screen. That indicated the number of medium crystal she had tossed into the console. There was a sort of table of content in the middle of the screen. It automatically moved to the next page after every few seconds. It displayed a series of submenus under the Apocalyptic Worlds option. She casually browsed through the submenu and a few of them quickly caught her attention: [Coffee Bean World Thread], [Fireworks and Pyrotechnics World Thread]...

She made a few random selections and discovered that they would go to a page with two opinions: "Add" and "Search". There was a corresponding price marked beside the search option. Some of them were 11 medium crystals and others were 23 medium crystals. From the looks of it, the information about different worlds was priced differently.

This was all too fascinating. Lin Sanjiu took quite some time before she could slowly adjust to what was in front of her. After she thought for a moment, she organized her thoughts and identified her three top priorities.

Before she came to Mokugyo Encyclopedic Forum, Lin Sanjiu had always been in a mild state of constant anxiety. She met and befriended many different companions in each world. While it comforted her to think back about her memories and the time she spent with them. It was also those shared memories with them that made her current situation quite unbearable...

Lin Sanjiu took a deep breath and quickly input "Hyperthermal Hell" into the search box.

Even though Lin Sanjiu snatched quite a sum of money from

Honeysuckle, she was almost running out of red crystal after they bought the two masks. According to his introduction, she would need to earn some red crystals by adding information into the database before she could complete what she wanted to do.

"[Hyperthermal Hell]: D Level. Description: A remote countryside. Add entry?"

Lin Sanjiu let out a long sigh and pressed on the "Confirm" button.

Familiar photos of the place she thought she would never see again appeared on the screen before her.

Chapter 324: Haha! There Isn't a "The Journey To The Encyclopedic Forum 2"

Today was just like any other day at Mokugyo Encyclopedic Forum. The place was bustling with activity as the crowd moved like rivers and streams between the monitor screens and metallic consoles. The noise of indiscernible human conversations and the heat from the crowd filled the hall.

"Yes. Yes. Okay. I will see you later," a tall and young handsome man nodded his head as he stood beside an individual console. He grinned widely as he watched two ladies walking away from him. After that, he sighed self-deprecatingly, "Sigh. If only I were born handsome like this..."

The girl with two ponytails held the black rope in her hand expressionlessly. When she turned to look at Honeysuckle, she actually looked puzzled. To Soulsqn, that flirty conversation between this human and the other two humans was totally pointless. Soulsqn found Lin Sanjiu much easier to understand compared to this man.

When she turned behind, she saw a fully focused Lin Sanjiu staring at the screen in front of her. Lin Sanjiu was not paying any attention to them. Honeysuckle turned her head and observed the girl beside him quietly.

She wasn't wearing a mask so that was her original face...

Even though a person's outward appearance can be deceiving, compared to the woman behind him, this young girl seemed easier to deal with...

Honeysuckle stealthily took two steps backward. He lifted his hands, pretending that it was just a casual action. As expected, the girl was tugged along as the rope taut.

"There is a chance to escape! " he thought to himself. Just as he

became excited and even before that thought left his mind, the girl turned and looked at him as if she had detected something. She opened her mouth wide.

There was a sudden loud thud as he hit the "case" of a console. Lin Sanjiu was still writing her entry when that noise took her by surprise. She turned behind and saw Honeysuckle trying frantically to stand up. When she looked at Soulsqn, she saw the creature moving its lower jaw. She was slowly kneading her lower jaw so that it could return to its original position.

"What are you two doing?" Lin Sanjiu asked with a frown.

If it wasn't for the [Mask] he was wearing, Honeysuckle's expression would definitely be far worse. "My dear mother, what is that thing... Ah? Why didn't you tell me.... gosh..." As he said this, he squeezed into the same "case" as Lin Sanjiu. Apparently, he felt that it was safer to be by Lin Sanjiu's side.

"Go away!"

"I won't look," Honeysuckle closed his eyes and turned away from the screen. "I'll just wait here."

Lin Sanjiu glared at him and then at Soulsqn. She didn't say anything in the end and just let him stay there.

Turning back to her screen, a picture of a blue planet disappeared from the screen. She had already completed her entry for [Hyperthermal Hell]. Sadly, it was only a D-Level world so she received very little red crystals for that entry. The number on the top right corner of the screen only increased by 3.

"In that case, Kisaragi Station is a B-level world, so I should get more money for it, right?" With this in mind, Lin Sanjiu opened [Kisaragi Station Thread]. When she reached the thread, she realized that she was too naive. Even though it was harder to survive in that world, it was quite famous in Twelve Worlds Centrum because of the unique spirits which occupied that world.

The reward for information about a certain world was dependent on two things. First, it was dependent on the world's level. Second, it was dependent on the rarity of the information. After writing down every single detail she forced herself to remember, she only received five red crystals for the entry.

When a person wrote an entry for a particular world, they could browse the corresponding thread for that world once for free. Using that opportunity, she noticed that the particular thread was filled with almost 100 entries about past experiences and information.

Sighing, Lin Sanjiu searched for Garden of Eden without much hope.

"[Garden of Eden]: Level C. Description: A shitty place that would make you uncomfortable each time you go there. Add entry?"

"Confirm."

After Lin Sanjiu typed listlessly about the world for a while. She decided just to write out her whole account of what had happened in Garden of Eden with every detail she could remember. She even added how she destroyed Garden of Eden City. Anyway, she was currently using a pseudonym, User 1112132225, so she wasn't worried.

After she confirmed her entry, the number of red crystals indicated on the screen did not change even after some time.

"What's wrong? Why isn't it responding?" she grumbled.

Even though Honeysuckle couldn't see what she was doing, it did not hinder him from commenting, "Is it lagging? This is common. Sometimes the system requires some time to audit an entry. If a person adds a fake entry, it might kill someone inadvertently."

"That makes sense..." Lin Sanjiu thought to herself. Seeing that the auditing process would take some time, she opened an announcement submenu called "Craglist".

A user had to categorize the announcement they wanted to publish. Different categories had different prices. The postings which involved searching for teammates and getting information about Consular Officers were the most expensive. After every 14 months, a posthuman would have to leave a world. There were residents with established businesses, shops, pets, and children. Unfortunately, they can't bring them along. During this period, if a person has a working in a partnership with someone from another world within the Twelve Worlds Centrum, it would be much easier for both people.

Lin Sanjiu scanned through the 324 categories very quickly. Originally, she thought that she could only put her announcement in the "Others" category. However, her eyes caught something. She was slightly startled when she noticed it. She opened the "Corpses".

Unlike the other categories, the "Corpses" section was quite empty. There were only a few very suspiciously worded advertisements: "Offering high prices for corpses of young ladies below 20", "Accepting torsos and whole bodies. Supply must be stable", "Corpses transformation. Quick Job. 3 days"...

"What is all this creepy stuff..." Lin Sanjiu opened the first announcement. She realized that the requestor had a very specific requirement for the corpse he was looking for: Mid-length long black hair, "Shanling" race, no livor mortis spots, and no visible wounds...

Lin Sanjiu suddenly shuddered for no particular reason. She quickly closed the page. After she found the box to publish her announcement, she spent only six medium red crystal to post an advertisement.

"Seagral Square, RECYCLE-FL3-T120, is a corpse disposal collection point. There are fresh dead bodies there all year round. Some have wounds, but most of them are intact. Suitable for medical research."

With a soft 'ding', her advertisement was published. She exhaled and hoped silently that the message would reach its intended target. Her current situation was too dangerous. Luck was really the only thing she could rely on now.

Out of the three matters, she had only completed her first priority.

"Hey, I have another question," Lin Sanjiu turned to look at Honeysuckle. "If I want to get information about a few worlds, do I have just to stand here and read each of the message threads?"

If that was the case, the effect of the [Mask] she was wearing wasn't going to last. However, she definitely wasn't the first person to face this problem. Honeysuckle pointed to a white ball beside the console, "Of course not. If you spend another red crystal, you can print out whatever you need from that thread and bring it along with you. But you don't have enough red crystals. I guess you can only print out the information about two worlds—"

Before he could finish his sentence, an urgent, piercing sound rang twice in the center of the hall. The sound rippled through the hall from above. After that alarm stopped, Lin Sanjiu realized that it was the sound of the Mokugyo she had heard before.

When she turned to Honeysuckle, she noticed that his face had changed.

"What... what's the matter?"

A large screen not far from her answered her question.

As the rapping sound rang out, a message popped up on all the few hundred white screens. Bright red words rolled down from the top of the screen and caught the attention of the crowd, "Announcement: A new AA-level world [Garden of Eden] has emerged. All Consular Officers and people heading to this world, please take note. Announcement: A new AA-level world..."

Lin Sanjiu stared blankly at the words in front of her. For a

moment, she couldn't process what was happening. She heard someone screaming something from the far corner of the hall. Then, a series of "dings" rang out behind her. That snapped out her of her trance.

Honeysuckle had a stunned expression as the number on the right corner of Lin Sanjiu's screen jumped to "389". However, that wasn't the main reason why Lin Sanjiu was shocked. Pages after pages of text requesting for more information popped up on her screen. Then, the console continued ringing.

"What... what's happening?" Even though Lin Sanjiu said that, she had a vague answer in her mind. This was certainly related to the information she had entered. However, there were other questions in her mind: "How could it be an AA-level world? Isn't A-level the highest tier? What do this people want? Why are they trying to contact me?"

Honeysuckle turned to look at Lin Sanjiu. He suddenly felt a sense of admiration for her that he did not have before. "Did you input information about that AA-level world?"

He didn't need Lin Sanjiu to answer him. He quickly looked around them and hit the screen of her console. "We have to leave! There are only four known AA-level worlds even after all these years. The moment you arrived, you added another one... It's no surprise that all sorts of people come knocking! We don't have time now. If you don't want to be discovered—"

Lin Sanjiu moved faster than Honeysuckle's speech. The moment the console started slowly spitting out red crystals, Lin Sanjiu immediately stuffed them into her cloth pouch. When she stood up, she had already hidden her astonishment from her face. She walked out of her 'cubicle' calmly.

Honeysuckle and Soulsqn followed behind her in a hurry. One of them tried to act as if nothing had happened; the other was totally unaware of the seriousness of the situation. Consequently, they did

not draw any unwanted attention. With every intention, Lin Sanjiu and the others walked in a controlled pace and subtly blended in with the crowd.

However, as they headed for the exit, they had to stop because of the human traffic jam in front of them.

"What happened?" There was a noisy commotion and it was difficult to hear what the others were saying. The announcement of the AA-level world probably did not cause this chaotic situation. Without any other options, Lin Sanjiu grabbed a random person to get more information, "Why are you guys jamming up the exit?"

"Someone sealed the entrance! They are trying to catch somebody..."

Chapter 325: Jingle Bell, Jingle Bell

When Honeysuckle's body hit the wall with a muffled thud, it shook a few times due to the impact of the force. Lin Sanjiu could feel his blood and muscles shifting under her palm. Lin Sanjiu tightened the grip on the man's throat. Fire was almost spewing from her amber eyes. "Was it you? Did you contact Puppeteer's dogs?!"

Honeysuckle was pinned to the wall. His legs were dangling above the floor and he was making gasping sounds as he struggled to breathe. His face quickly turned red.

Even though they had moved to a secluded corner, Lin Sanjiu was still worried that others would take notice. She looked around and finally loosened her grip.

Oxygen rushed into Honeysuckle's lungs. He took a noisy deep breath and spluttered as he proclaimed his innocence, "No. It wasn't me. Don't you know me? I don't have anything with me. You mentioned Pu... Puppeteer..."

"Many of your things fell out, but that might not be everything you have." Lin Sanjiu narrowed her eyes. She ignored his argument, "You must have hidden the Special Item for contacting the other members of your team."

"I really didn't. My dear mother!" Honeysuckle was on the verge of tears, "We just accepted the mission together. Who would be so corny? There is no way we're going to share our contacting methods! Tell me! What do I have to do to make you believe me?"

His anxious and breathy voice did not draw anybody's attention. It simply faded into the noise around them. Noise reverberated through the empty space between the hall and its ceiling. Lin Sanjiu frowned as she thought about his question, finally, she pulled her fingers away from his throat.

"You had better be telling me the truth," her eyes shifted to the person beside him, "otherwise, I will hand you over to her."

Honeysuckle did not even dare to look at Soulsqn. He held his neck and nodded profusely.

"If this guy didn't sell me out, those people blocking the entrance might not be after me. But..."

"How much longer will the effect of our [Masks] last?" Lin Sanjiu asked quietly.

"We still have about 20 minutes..." Honeysuckle replied while massaging his neck.

20 minutes sounded long but if those people outside were going to filter through this crowd, it would take way longer. 20 minutes would be over in the blink of an eye. She knew she must not show her true appearance because the "Searching for a woman with skeletal wings" announcement message scrolled past the display screens just a minute ago.

"I need to leave this place immediately," Lin Sanjiu held her black rope tightly. "I don't care what you use—"

Before she could finish her sentence, she was so shocked that she just stopped speaking.

Looking up, Lin Sanjiu was stunned when the hall suddenly became dead silent. The hundreds of people in the same hall seemed to have heard a command that she had missed out. The crowd suddenly moved to two sides of the main hall, soundlessly. They created an empty space in the center which was slowly broadening. Even though so many people were moving simultaneously, there was only the soft shuffling sound of people's clothes rubbing against each other.

The black rope in Lin Sanjiu's hand became taut. She looked behind her and realized that Honeysuckle had already taken many steps backward. Seeing that she wasn't moving, he urgently

mouthed for her to move backward.

"Is Puppeteer here?"

This was the first thought that surfaced in Lin Sanjiu's mind. When she was in Hyperthermal Hell, Puppeteer had caught a few hundred people and placed them all together. At that time, Shen Lianqi, another resident from Twelve Worlds Centrum, acted in the same manner. He didn't dare to even breathe a word...

As she thought to herself, she picked up her pace and followed the crowd. The noisy and active crowd gathered to two sides of the main hall, like Moses parting the sea. After she watched the situation, for some reason, Lin Sanjiu suddenly realized that the person that had just arrived wasn't Puppeteer.

She could still remember Shen Lianqi's reaction. She had a slightly strange way of interpreting both situations. At that time, even though Shen Lianqi was very scared of Puppeteer, it was understandable. His reaction of fear was similar to a person threatened by a knife to his neck.

Lin Sanjiu passed by a row of Twelve Worlds Centrum residents and stood quietly by their side. They did not seem to notice her. Just moments ago, this group of posthumans was grumbling loudly about how they couldn't get out. Now, they were just staring at their own toes. They stood so stiffly that they could compete with Puppeteer's plastic mannequins. However, there wasn't fear on their faces. Instead, their faces were just pale and vacuous.

That sort of numbed look was clearly an expression of a kind of internalized fear.

From what Lin Sanjiu had observed, in Twelve Worlds Centrum, Puppeteer probably wasn't as powerful as she thought. The huge crowd had opened a path in just half a minute. They moved so fluidly that it was as if they had practiced it many times.

"Ho ho ho!"

A high-spirited voice suddenly pierced through the air. It exploded abruptly from the center of the hall. "There isn't anyone there, " Lin Sanjiu thought to herself, puzzled. Just then, a silhouette of a person suddenly appeared out of nowhere.

"Merry—"

When she had a clear view of the person, her eyes were fixated. She couldn't help opening her mouth ever so slightly.

"Christmas—"

"That... that.." she couldn't resist looking at Honeysuckle hoping to get some answers, "That person..."

Just like other people in the crowd, the latter's head was lowered. He was staring hard at the tip of his shoes. He did not even look at Lin Sanjiu once. He only tugged her black rope a few times as if to signal for her to lower her eyes.

Even though her rationality told her that it was safer to follow the crowd, Lin Sanjiu was unable to tear her eyes away from that person. In her impression, Christmas was just around the corner but...

"EVERYONE!"

After that final loud exclamation, the man suddenly burst into a bout of loud laughter. Perhaps, his huge belly helped his voice resonate. His laughter was ear-splittingly loud. It was so loud that even the walls seemed to vibrate.

"After such a long time, I am extremely delighted to see all of you alive and well. Ho ho!"

Santa Claus—that's right, it was Santa Claus—stroked his huge and thick beard. His healthy pink skin was flushed. He narrowed his pair of smiling curved eyes in a creepy manner. His voice boomed, "It has been a long time since I've taken a walk outside..."

All of you probably didn't expect me. I guess everyone still remembers my rules, right?"

The man was wearing an emerald green Christmas costume. "Santa Claus" stood at the top of a large monitor screen. His gaze swept across each and every single head below him. There was an intensity in his eyes. When he opened his mouth to flash a huge grin, a deep black hole appeared amidst his white, fluffy beard full of curls.

"Only obedient kids can get a Christmas present... Ho ho ho." Even though he had a very deep, rich voice, each word he spat from his mouth assaulted his audience like a sharp, piercing knife.

"But, I left home in a hurry today. I didn't bring my presents. What should I do?" Santa Claus said those words as if he was really very anxious. Following which, some super skinny black figures squeezed out from behind him, one after the other. "Why don't I package your lives as presents, my good, obedient kids? Ho ho."

When the skinny figures walked into the light, Lin Sanjiu realized that they were stick-thin women. Their limbs were so skinny that they almost seemed like the size of a finger. They were all tall and slender. They looked like thin crickets in their Christmas mini skirts. The leading woman chuckled and jumped down from the large monitor screen. She skipped daintily toward Lin Sanjiu and the other posthumans. Her waist looked like it would snap any second.

"Santa Claus' little helpers would help me ascertain if you're a good or naughty kid..." Santa Claus added another "Ho ho." He laughed. "To be a good kid..."

Lin Sanjiu held her breath.

She had never seen posthumans that were so strange. Not only were their outfits very weird, but they each had a strange, dangerous vibe that everyone could clearly sense.

"There are two criteria." Santa Claus raised two fat stubby fingers. "First, Growth Types do not have to die."

Lin Sanjiu immediately let out a sigh of relief. She suddenly felt the goosebumps on her back. It was as if she suddenly regained her sense of touch. Just as she was feeling relieved, it dawned on her that there were very few Growth-Types posthumans.

Finally, there was a small commotion from the crowd. However, when those "crickets" jumped forward from their positions, the commotion died down instantly.

"Ho ho. Many kids are disappointed. Ho ho. Don't worry," Santa Claus waved his hands. "The second criteria is that all good kids do not have Puppeteer's smelly stench. These kids can also keep their lives as a present."

All the muscles in Lin Sanjiu's body tensed up. The second her body was about to react, she was tugged back by the black rope in her hand.

"Don't move!" Honeysuckle's voice was so desperate, it was almost as if he was begging, "No matter what, you must not move!"

"I don't know what happened between you and Puppeteer but you must trust me. If you step out right now, nothing good will happen. You will also implicate me." In that moment of desperation, he shared his true apprehension. "When was the last time you had seen Puppeteer? If it was already some time back, why don't you take a gamble!"

The last time Lin Sanjiu saw Puppeteer was already more than two years ago. Her confrontation with Muntjac Bai was also at least five days ago.

During these five days, Lin Sanjiu had worked with the cold winds blowing at her. She had also eaten her meals by a fried rice fountain. On top of that, she had changed her clothes twice—

With those thoughts, her tensed body slowly relaxed a little.

"That's right. It is impossible that they will smell any scent on me —" Lin Sanjiu thought to herself. Besides, she had a trump card that no one else could imagine. Lin Sanjiu exhaled and looked at Soulsqn.

"What shall we do with this Growth-Type person? She had interacted with Puppeteer before."

A woman planted her cricket-like face directly in front of Lin Sanjiu.

Chapter 326: Come, Make A Wish

Her current situation was worse than she had imagined. Lin Sanjiu pursed her lips and stared at the Santa Claus standing at the top of the large monitor screen. She could hear the sound of her blood rushing in her ears, the sound of her staccato pulse.

Honeysuckle was right about this strange man.

For a long time now, she had not met any worthy adversaries. The victories she had time and time again gave Lin Sanjiu blind confidence in herself. Yet, today, she felt an unexplainable anger. She felt, once again, like a newcomer in an apocalyptic world.

The sound of the Mokugyo had been silent for a long time.

A few moments ago, most of the posthumans who had fulfilled the second requirement had already rushed out of the exit like gushing floodwaters. To avoid offending the Grim Reaper behind them, hundreds of people left without making any sound. The only sounds that could be heard were their rustling clothes. In the blink of an eye, all of them had disappeared from the building. After they left, waves of cold wind swept in through the large opened doors of Mokugyo Encyclopedic Forum.

When Lin Sanjiu felt a breeze on her face, she knew that the effect of her [Mask] had ended. The fragile-looking girl suddenly grew into a tall woman. When two pairs of large skeletal wings suddenly appeared, a few people standing around Lin Sanjiu were shocked.

Santa Claus gave her an indifferent glance; his expression remained unchanged.

"Santa, I... I'm a Growth-type..." an average-looking thin man started stammering as if he made a real effort to pluck up his courage, "You mentioned that Growth-types don't have to die... Can I leave, sir?"

Evidently, this was also the same thought that the others around him had.

Out of the hundreds of people, there were only seven people left. Apart from Lin Sanjiu, there were three other people who had the "Puppeteer's smelly stench". Right now, all three of them looked terrible. Their current complexions were like that of a decayed corpse which had been dug out from its grave. The remaining Growth-types stood far away, avoiding them like a plague.

Lin Sanjiu stood in the middle. Honeysuckle and Soulsqn were by her side. They were being watched by two "crickets".

When Lin Sanjiu had been discovered, Honeysuckle tried everything he could to try to escape from the [Female Slave Bondage Rope]. However, the rope just dug deeper into his skin. Before he could loosen them, the "crickets" already spoke, "Are you with her? Alright, go over there."

When she heard the words "with her", Soulsqn naturally walked out and stood beside Lin Sanjiu. Her actions certainly stunned the people around them. On the contrary, Honeysuckle, whose expression had turned ashen in an instant, only trudged begrudgingly toward Lin Sanjiu after Soulsqn shoved him. He stood behind Lin Sanjiu.

After they had gathered beneath Santa Claus, the weird and eccentric fat old man had not spoken a single word.

When the thin man's voice slowly became softer and softer and faded into nothing, Santa Claus stirred.

"Ho ho ho. Good kids don't have to die," he bent his fat, stout body forward. His curly white beard moved, revealing his mouth which was like a black gaping hole. He slowly lifted his beard a little, then his hook-like eyes narrowed into two slits. He seemed to be smiling as he continued, "But, I didn't say that you could leave."

The thin man looked at him blankly as if he had forgotten how to speak.

"Don't worry," the Santa Claus in a green suit jumped down from the monitor screen. He landed with a heavy thump which shook the ground. When he stood straight again, he was about a head taller than Lin Sanjiu. Soulsqn's current petite body couldn't even match the thickness of the old man's thigh.

"I just happen to need you Growth-types now... I think all of you won't reject Santa Claus' little request, right?"

This was followed by a grin showing the man's abyss-like black mouth. All the Growth-types present shuddered.

"According to his words, his first criteria was just a way of filtering the Growth-types in the crowd... The words he specifically chose was also worth noting. The way he said 'you Growth-types' seemed to imply that he himself wasn't a Growth-type. The way he worded 'just happen to need' made it sound as if what he had planned for them was going to be dangerous..." Lin Sanjiu thought to herself and couldn't help looking at Soulsqn. There were too many people right now; If Soulsqn were to use her illusions, her ability's area of effect wasn't large enough. Lin Sanjiu wondered if Soulsqn could still squeeze out some of her pheromones...

"Come, all you disobedient kids," Santa Claus turned to the posthumans who had "Puppeteer's smelly stench" and walked slowly toward them. When he walked past Lin Sanjiu, the smell of new clothes mixed with the stench of rotting flesh hit her.

"If you are honest about the time, place and circumstances involving your interaction with Puppeteer, I might forgive you and still give you your present."

The posthumans' eyes immediately lit up and exchanged glances. A girl took the first step forward. Though she had strange makeup, it did not hide her beauty.

"Santa," she said. Even though her voice was trembling, it was very pleasant-sounding. It was delicate and sweet. "I come from Heaven Underworld. I have always had a profound respect for you. This time, I really know nothing about Puppeteer! Two days ago, I was looking for a battle-slave—a battle doll. I wanted to exchange that for a visa from a Consular Officer. I asked many people and published many advertisements... Among those people, I think one of them might have been Puppeteer's subordinate... I really don't know anything else, sir."

Her words were quite valueless—she was either telling the truth or was very stupid.

Santa Claus did not make any comments and simply waited for her to finish her story. He nodded but did not smile. Somehow, his reserved temperament toward her seemed to suddenly encourage the two other people. One after the other, they quickly explained how was their involvement with Puppeteer. After Lin Sanjiu heard their explanation, she realized that they had the same experiences as the first beautiful girl. They were unlucky and accidentally came in contact with him or his subordinates.

After the three posthumans finished their accounts, Santa Claus frowned. His pinkish skin looked extremely healthy and well-maintained. When he frowned, only a few wrinkles appeared. He stared at the three people and crooked his head. He suddenly laughed, "Not bad. You guys are not bad. Ho ho."

The beautiful girl gulped.

"Hold on to your present well."

It was impossible to catch the full details of what happened next. Lin Sanjiu's vision blurred for a second. Shortly after, there was a loud boom. There was a blast of hot air. Lin Sanjiu felt countless warm things hitting her skin. As the people beside her started to scream "ahhhh" mindlessly, Lin Sanjiu wiped her face. When she looked up at the spot not far from her, she saw the beautiful girl's

pair of legs. It was slowly falling to the ground.

Yes. It was just a pair of legs. Her upper body had disappeared. There was just nothing above her legs. Lin Sanjiu spotted the girl's pelvis bone in the mash of blood and flesh which remained. It took quite some time for Lin Sanjiu to realize that the upper bodies of the three posthumans had been blasted to bits. Globbs of flesh and blood sprayed across the hall. They landed on Lin Sanjiu, the floor, the screen and even the walls which were far from them. Everything was covered with their remnants, some of this globbs were still bubbling.

Lin Sanjiu didn't even see Santa Claus moving.

Regardless of what he did, if he used that move on her, she would just be a puddle of blood now.

Santa Claus wiped the blood on his chest and looked at his own palm. After he saw that blood spatter on his chest, he suddenly became high-spirited again, "Ho ho ho. It's red."

"His Santa costume is green..." Lin Sanjiu suddenly realized something. Santa Claus' costume should be... red.

When Santa Claus turned around, shreds of flesh were still hanging from his beard. Lin Sanjiu felt all her muscles tightening but she only felt a sense of despair. She didn't know what she could do. But Santa Claus walked passed her as if he didn't notice her. Instead, he walked to the other three Growth-types.

Swish.

A woman started trembling as she finally called out a Rubik's cube.

"Don't... don't come over," her voice was parched. She could barely hold on to her Rubik's cube. "Who are you? Just let me go!"

From the looks of it, just like Lin Sanjiu, she must have just reached Twelve Worlds Centrum.

"You don't need to be nervous. Hoho," Santa Claus said slowly, he did not even look at the Rubik's cube once, "I already told all of you. Growth-types are good kids. Your presents are your own lives."

The woman's lips trembled as she looked at Santa Claus doubtfully. A Twelve Worlds Centrum resident was standing beside her. He pushed her away and looked at Santa Claus with an almost urgent face, "Santa, I know. Please let me make my wish, sir!"

"Make a wish? What wish?" Lin Sanjiu wanted to ask Honeysuckle about it despite her fear. Even if they couldn't make any sounds, she could at least mouth her question. However, she saw Honeysuckle lying limply on the ground. He wiped the tears off his face every now and then.

But, the next scenario answered her queries.

Santa Claus chuckled. His loud voice instantly echoed through the hall. He strolled over to a chair and sat down casually. He hit his own thigh and his eyes arched again, "So, you know the rules. Come here."

The medium-built young man certainly looked like a child when he sat on Santa Claus' though shivering with fear.

"Tell me, what present would you like?" Santa Claus eyes formed two arches.

"I-I want to keep my life, sir," the young man clenched his teeth, released them and clenched them again. After repeating that a few times, he finally managed to finish his sentence.

"Hoho! Would you listen to Santa Claus and be a good kid?"

"I— will. I will. Really..."

"That's great. Hoho! If that's the case, Santa Claus will make sure that you get your present." After Santa Claus said those words, the young man let out a sigh of relief and slid down from Santa Claus'

knee. But, his face immediately turned sour again. A "cricket" came over and brought him to one side.

Seeing that someone finally managed to survive, the remaining two Growth-types finally followed what he did. The other woman who was not from Twelve Worlds Centrum sat on Santa Claus' knee. She looked like she was about to vomit. Despite everything, the woman managed to keep her life and was brought away by the "crickets".

Right now, only Lin Sanjiu's group and Santa Claus remained in the hall.

Chapter 327: Missed Him by That Much

Slap. Slap. Those consecutive sounds were the most unsettling sounds Lin Sanjiu had ever heard in her life. She was filled with such dread that she could feel her stomach churning. If she wanted, she could vomit on command. The mixture of nervousness, anger, and helplessness had vanished without a trace. Her face was pale and covered with cold sweat.

Even though Santa Claus was sitting on a chair, he was so huge that he was like a small mountain. His white beard had been dyed pink due to the bits of blood in it. It shifted upward as if he was smiling. As he raised his hand and hit his own thighs, that slapping sound rang out again.

"Come, sit here and make a wish." When Santa Claus smiled, his hook-like eyes arched so much that it was mind-numbingly creepy. The gaping hole behind his beard was faintly discernable, "Hoho. Quick."

Lin Sanjiu stored her [Female Slave Bondage Rope] while in a half-numbed state. She stopped Soulsqn from following her and walked over to Santa Claus with her rigid body.

She had to thank herself for making the right choices for how the next situation unfolded...

—

Ten minutes ago, when Santa Claus slowly turned his head, Lin Sanjiu had come to a decision despite her dismay. After she witnessed the first three posthumans turning into blood mush in front of her eyes and thinking about what they had said, she decided to choose a different route. She decided to be honest with Santa Claus and told him everything about the grudge Puppeteer had against her. She also added how he tried to ambush her at Progressor Alliance and how she escaped from him...

It takes a genius to figure out the connection between Santa

Claus and Puppeteer and what had happened between them. As she gave her account, Lin Sanjiu could not feel any part of her body except her vocal cords. Her eyes were fixed on Santa Claus' body. She was afraid that she would miss any sudden movements and end up dead without even an intact corpse. After she finished her account of what had happened, Lin Sanjiu's body was soaked with cold sweat. Even her eyes ached a little.

Thankfully, Santa Claus seemed extremely pleased with her "story". He finally decided that he would give her a present.

"Your present is different from the other stinky chaps," his husky voice drifted into her ears lightly. "If you are even more obedient, I will give you something more than your life. Hohoho."

The moment Lin Sanjiu processed that she had survived, she felt a numb sensation throughout her whole body.

"What do you want me to do?" No matter how scared she was, even if she risked getting killed, Lin Sanjiu couldn't force her to add a "Sir" behind her sentence when addressing Santa Claus.

Fortunately, Santa Claus didn't seem to detect that small hint of disrespect, as he continued smiling. He waited for her to walk over to him before replying, "Once you've made your wish, you will know..."

He did not say another word. However, the subtle meaning of his words immediately gave Lin Sanjiu goosebumps. If she didn't make a wish, logically, she wouldn't get her "present". The consequence of not getting a present was clearly the slippery floor she was standing on.

"There is no opening... I have no chance to attack... There is no way I can win."

When Lin Sanjiu finally sat on Santa Claus' knee, she was trembling. She wished she could just tear off the part of her skin that was in contact with his knee. She took a deep breath and tried

to calm herself down but it was useless.

Lin Sanjiu could not differentiate between her fear and disgust. Every muscle on her body was so tensed that they couldn't get any harder. She did this as if it reduced the contact between her body and his to the minimum. The smell of Santa Claus' new clothes, a rotting stench and the metallic smell of fresh blood overwhelmed her.

The knee she was sitting on was icy cold, and she didn't feel even a hint of warmth.

"Tell me, will you listen to Santa Claus and be a good kid?" Santa Claus asked with a saccharine, cloying tone.

"I..." Lin Sanjiu was willing to give up all her Special Items just to exchange for a chance to see how the other Growth-types were now. Unfortunately, when the man's white, curly beard lowered, she knew she could not hesitate, "I... will."

The next second, she felt her abdominal muscles tighten as if something had been injected into them. This was immediately followed by a deafening burst of laughter. Santa Claus convulsed so much with his laughter that Lin Sanjiu fell off his knee.

Lin Sanjiu's ears hurt after hearing his thunderous laughter. She was clueless about what she had actually promised the man. She climbed up from the floor with her weak legs and looked up. Honeysuckle was not far from her. He stared blankly at her. Lin Sanjiu could not tell what was going on in his mind.

"That's great! You're not only a Growth-type but you hold a grudge against that play doll..." Santa Claus withdrew his gaze from Lin Sanjiu and stood up, "That's great! Hoho. Now, I have to find where that play doll is hiding, so I need you to come along with me to another place..."

As the last word in his sentence reverberated through the hall, Lin Sanjiu finally understood what that "wish" meant. Actually,

the answer to that had been very obvious. She didn't know why she didn't realize that earlier. Before one could "be a good kid", they had to "listen to Santa Claus".

It was difficult to describe the sensation Lin Sanjiu was feeling at that moment. Just like how people instinctively know that they have to eat when they are hungry and sleep when they are tired, every single cell in Lin Sanjiu was telling her that she needed to follow Santa Claus to that place, otherwise...

She realized that the spot in her lower abdomen which tightened just now marked the division between the splattered upper body and the intact lower body of those posthumans who were killed by Santa Claus.

Lin Sanjiu did not dare tarry. She quickly followed the green figure walking ahead. "W-Wait! Wait!" Being too anxious, Lin Sanjiu accidentally called out. Sure enough, Santa Claus turned his head. Lin Sanjiu quivered as she tried not to tremble, and tried her best not to think if what she wanted was considered disobedience, "Well, can my friend... follow me?"

Naturally, she was referring to Soulsqn.

With Soulsqn with her, at least, she had an additional assurance. If she noticed any opportunity, she could definitely use Soulsqn's help to escape. However, she wondered if Santa Claus would just allow her to blatantly bring along a helper.

Unexpectedly, the tall, stout old man did not seem to mind.

No. To be more accurate, not only did he not seem to mind, for some reason, he seemed to welcome that idea.

"Hoho. Not bad. Of course, you can." After he took a few steps, he turned back and eyed both Soulsqn and Honeysuckle, "Which one?"

Lin Sanjiu didn't even look once at Honeysuckle, she raised her hand pointed at Soulsqn, "Her. Out of pure coincidence, I picked

up that one here. He's useless."

Since he had already taken Honeysuckle's red crystals, she decided to help him and give him a chance to escape.

Soulsqn looked at Santa Claus. Through her human suit, Lin Sanjiu couldn't tell what was her true expression. She carefully moved away from Santa Claus and approached Lin Sanjiu.

Santa Claus narrowed his eyes and stared at Soulsqn's back before he slowly turned his head back.

Honeysuckle only dared to move timidly after the sound of footsteps faded far away from the main hall. He looked up. The hall of Mokugyo Encyclopedic Forum was still brightly lit with white fluorescent lights. The screens were still bright. The messages and announcements were still rolling through the screens. Without the sound of a single human voice, the Encyclopedic Forum seemed like a totally different place.

The spot where Santa Claus had been standing was now empty. He had already left with Lin Sanjiu and Soulsqn. The only proof that he was here was the floor littered with bits of flesh.

When Honeysuckle took his first step, he felt his blood suddenly moving again. To him, it was as if his blood had been frozen solid during the past half an hour.

"Damn, how can I be so unlucky," he mumbled to himself as he stumbled toward the entrance. "Santa Claus had not appeared in such a long time, I thought he was just an urban legend..."

As he approached the exit, he felt his courage slowly returning. When he felt the sun rays on his body, Honeysuckle squinted. He thought he heard someone outside suddenly exclaiming, "Someone came out!"

As one of the most important places in Red Nautilus, the survivors had already spread news about the incident at Mokugyo Encyclopedic Forum throughout Free District.

"He left. There is no one else inside." After he said that to the people waiting outside, Honeysuckle felt that he didn't have the mood to answer any more of their questions. He slipped into an alley, trying to mind his own business.

He needed to earn a little money and then have a good rest.

Perhaps, he was feeling a little dizzy. Honeysuckle felt that his body was a little slower than usual. In a moment of distraction, he bumped into a shadow when he was making a turn. He staggered before finally regaining his stability. Honeysuckle looked up and his face froze for a second. His attitude changed immediately.

"Hello, sir." He wiped the sweat on his forehead hoping to look a little more presentable to the party in front of him. "Hello, sir. I truly apologize. I didn't watch where I was going..."

"It is alright. Don't worry," the other party forgave him magnanimously. "Since we meet so coincidentally, I have some questions to ask you. I need your guidance."

"No, you're being too polite, sir. Just go ahead and ask away!"

"This is my first time visiting. There are many things I don't know about this place. If I would like to get some information, where should I go?"

"Ah, you've come to the right person, sir. Usually, we would go to Mokugyo Encyclopedic Forum to search for information. You can find all sorts of information there... But, I would advise you not to go there now..."

"Why?"

"A very dangerous person was there just now. Some people died. The floor was covered in blood... It must be chaotic now," Honeysuckle replied looking a little worried.

"Oh. I don't mind," the owner of that voice spoke gently. The way his whiskers twitched and the way he occasionally licked his paws just looked so very well-mannered and elegant. "Afterall... for

some reason, you humans just find it hard to reject my requests."

A sparkling glint flashed within the little cat's large emerald eyes.

Chapter 328: Meowie Hu, The Cat That Everybody Loves

Compared with Lin Sanjiu, Meowie Hu had everything going his way ever since he arrived at Red Nautilus. When he was at Kisaragi Station, he didn't meet many living people around. He was only vaguely aware of his influence and wasn't really quite sure how it worked. However, once he reached Free District, the cat doctor realized something:

Humans can easily be deceived!

Ever since he reached the Free District, everyone treated him with warm hospitality. Some people offered him a comfortable place to sleep, some of them brought him around to try all sort of cuisines, there were even people who willingly shared their red crystals with him... Putting aside the other benefits he received, he had already tried every flavor of Red Nautilus specialty buns.

The Meowie Hu of today was vastly different from before.

After more than a month of such exquisite care, his silky fur shone with each step he took. A random posthuman had enthusiastically groomed his soft fur. Right now, his fluffy tail was exceptionally beautiful. He had a bright red butterfly bow on his neck and a small knapsack on his back. There were 20 medium red crystals in it, some small dried fish and several small Special Items. They all came from his kind-hearted donors.

The cat doctor who had everything going for him had only two regrets. First, he had been separated from the siblings and Lin Sanjiu. He had been transported to this place too abruptly. He only remembered Sea?? Square and nothing else. After he found that place and entered Seagral Square, he spent two mind-grueling days there before heading out. Naturally, he didn't find out any information.

The second regret was that it had been a long time since he had seen a dead body.

Even though many people had promised him that he could take their corpse after they died, none of them were willing to die immediately.

To find his friends and to find more corpses, the cat doctor strolled to Mokugyo Encyclopedic Forum with his small paw steps after getting directions. He came to the entrance of the building which faced the main street. The entrance of the building looked exceptionally grand. A large mokugyo was hanging in the middle of a huge arch doorway. Its polished surface glistened under the sun. It swayed in mid-air, hanging about a human's height away from the ground. It separated the doorway into two paths, the entrance, and the exit. Unlike other days, the usually noisy entrance to the building was very quiet. When Meowie looked past the mokugyo, he saw the empty main hall.

Meowie Hu slowed down and walked into the main hall silently.

Even though that horrible incident was just over, a few brave posthumans already re-entered the building. The few people gathered deep in the main hall. Their quiet discussions buzzed within the arched ceiling and walls of the building, making faint echoes.

When the cat doctor approached them in a rather reserved manner, without exception, all of the posthumans there were "bowled over" by his elegance.

"What happened here?" Meowie stopped when he saw the pile of flesh and the pool of blood. He stopped quite some distance away from the mess as he was afraid that he might dirty his paws. "How were they minced?"

"Doctor, are you here to conduct an autopsy?' a posthuman asked reverently, "I don't think you should waste that effort, sir. This is the work of Santa Claus..."

Meowie Hu wasn't interested in the three pairs of human legs without any upper body. He had even less interest in finding out who their murderer was. He nodded his head showing his pity. Then, he asked the posthumans politely, "Would any of you be willing to spend some time with me? This is my first time visiting, I don't know much about this place..."

The posthuman who had been chosen by Meowie, among the group of enthusiastic volunteers, beamed with honor. He brought the cat doctor to one of the individual consoles.

"Look, sir. You can place your input like this. It will show you the results..."

After the volunteer demonstrated how the console functioned, that man even threw a handful of red crystals into the console.

When he saw the number on the top right-hand corner reaching 30, Meowie Hu pressed the screen with his paw unceremoniously. After he understood how the console worked, he already knew what he wanted to search. When the results popped up, he immediately uttered a soft, "Huh?"

There was only one message on the screen: "Due to our relevant local laws and regulations, part of your search result could not be displayed."

The male posthuman came over and looked at the screen, his expression also turned a little funny.

"Did you search the terms 'Progression Alliance' and 'Puppeteer'?"

Meowie Hu stared back at him boldly, "Why? What's wrong?"

He took a very clear logical approach to the matter. When they were at Kisaragi Station, the siblings mentioned that someone called Puppeteer held some sort of grudge against Lin Sanjiu. The siblings were also from some sort of alliance which was on bad terms with Puppeteer. Since he couldn't find Reno and Rena, he thought he could find more clues about their whereabouts once he

found any information about the conflict between the Alliance and Puppeteer. Once he found them, he knew Lin Sanjiu couldn't be far.

Though his train of thought was quite sound, Meowie Hu did not expect that he would meet a setback right at the start of his search. He swatted the screen with the pad of his paw a few times, but the message remained.

"Erm, it is like this..." The male posthuman looked around. When he turned back to look at Meowie, he whispered very quietly, "If you want to find out more about 'that matter', you don't have to use the system to search..."

The cat sat down and wrapped his fluffy tail elegantly around himself. "You seem to know about it... Please tell me more," he said politely.

"Ah-ha, of course! It's like this. Half a year ago... rumors regarding this matter started spreading. At that time, no one thought it was true... Oh, let me tell you everything from the beginning.

"It all started about four to five months ago. I don't really know the full details. At that time, there was news that a new pocket dimension had been spotted a few kilometers away from Free District. It was in the middle of the sea, west from Free District. At first, it wasn't really a major event. No one would go to the middle of the sea for no rhyme or reason. The pocket dimension didn't affect us even one bit..."

The cat doctor had never seen the sea before. He did not go to the seaside even after arriving in Free District. However, to keep up with his image, he nodded without changing his expression and pretended as if he knew what a sea was.

"I'm not doing well, so I couldn't join any of these organizations. I'm just a solo freelancer... When I got this information, most of the people already knew about it. Within two days, all the airship

at the port were locked down. No one was allowed to fly their airship. I remembered that no one from the Cyber District could fly over at that time... I'll just stick to the subject. At that time, everyone suspected that it was related to the pocket dimension."

"Who placed the port on lockdown?"

"Sigh, Free District isn't controlled by any main administration. They can only make such a major decision with the approval of those few influential people. From how things developed, that pocket dimension must be very unusual... In the past, we would be thankful if those big shots didn't start fighting each other. I've never seen them coming to a common agreement."

The cat's eyes glistened as he seemed to be deep in thought, "What's special about that pocket dimension? Nobody knows?"

"Those big shots definitely know about it. People like me who struggle just to find for a Consular Officer wouldn't know. Who can I ask?" the male posthuman grimaced.

"How is this related to Puppeteer?"

"Let me tell you slowly, sir... Ever since Puppeteer leveled up two years ago, he had become more and more powerful. He is definitely involved in the matter regarding the lockdown. Two months later, they finally opened the port again. At that period of time, the atmosphere in Free District became very strange—there was a sort of intensity."

"What do you mean by that?" the cat tapped his tail showing his peaked interest, yet asked his question in a rather reserved manner.

"Well. Resources here started dwindling. The prices of food and water shot up. Supposedly, quite a few of the large organizations started to purchase all sorts of portable supplies in bulk, for some reason. The only person that did not start collecting supplies was Puppeteer. After all, his subordinates are all puppets! But, he

started harassing Progressor Alliance time and time again.

"Their name might sound imposing, but that organization..." the man clicked his tongue. "Even if you add all the members they have within the Twelve Worlds, they had barely a hundred members... Supposedly, people of that type are very weak when they first evolve. Most of them die before they can even reach any of the twelve worlds. The others who manage to survive and reach any of the twelve worlds have better options. In any case, they are way stronger than a freelancer like me... Anyway, I heard that Puppeteer and the people from the Progressor Alliance were in frequent contact. But, I am not sure what their conflict involved... Two months ago, all of them suddenly disappeared."

"Disappeared?" the cat's ears immediately shot up. "What do you mean, disappeared?"

"They're gone... They disappeared. Puppeteer and the members of the Progressor Alliance left. I don't know where they went." The man whispered and spoke with an added sense of mystery, "Those are the facts. I didn't tell you any of the unfounded rumors and conspiracy theories... Some say that all the Growth-types have been turned into puppets. Puppeteer is creating some powerful weapons... Well, those rumors are unreliable."

The cat doctor blinked twice.

If that was the case, perhaps, the siblings have disappeared along with the Progressor Alliance?

After Meowie thanked the male posthuman, he gestured for him to go away. The little cat folded his front paws and stared at the screen of the console thinking for some time. From the information he had just gotten, Progressor Alliance and Puppeteer had disappeared, whether by their own volition or forced. Considering the lockdown incident, it was probable that they might have entered the pocket dimension in the middle of the sea.

"Sea... What is that?"

He casually searched for the term "seafood" and narrowed his eyes for a while. He quickly decided that he would head for the pocket dimension in the middle of the sea. He was going to save his troubled friends.

However, before he left, the cat doctor did not forget to search the database using 'corpse' as a keyword. As he saw the few pages that appeared, his eyes grew brighter and brighter. He finally stood up.

"Corpse Disposal Collection Point? Okay... I will go to Seagral Square to take a look. I think I will still be in time even if I go to the port later."

The information that Lin Sanjiu had intentionally added to the database reached its intended target. Unfortunately, she was unable to follow her original plan to wait for the cat doctor there.

However, she could not have predicted that this information she left for the cat doctor nearly cost him his life.

Chapter 329: The Unexpected Meeting Between A Victim And A Perpetrator

"Doctor, please be careful, the road ahead is dark."

A fat middle-aged man with a forehead covered in sweat said as he smiled ardently and gratefully. Meanwhile, the large octopus he was holding in his arms wobbled. The octopus flailed its arm slowly in the air as if it barely had the strength to move. When the fat man noticed the octopus moving, his spirit rose and he quickly offered, "If you are ever around, please come by!"

"Alright... You don't have to accompany me," the cat doctor quickly replied. The red bow tie on his neck looked slight off-color under the blue light. His small backpack looked a lot bulkier than before as it was filled with items. The posthuman who had sewn the bag for the cat had specifically designed it so that it was easy for the cat doctor to use. When the cat doctor pressed the straps of the backpack, it would automatically open and rotate to the front of his body so that he could conveniently grab any items from the bag.

The cat had received quite a few good Special Items from the fat man as payment for his consultation fee and the cat knew that this particular customer was rather generous. However, the cat doctor felt that he probably won't ever walk pass here again.

"I'm leaving now. I hope your wife will recover soon." Meowie gave two "humans" a little polite nod before he continued towards the Corpse Disposal Collection Point.

No matter how much he earned from that job, the cat preferred working on humans.

Following the directions from the fat man, Meowie Hu walked for at least half an hour before he arrived at a sector made of steel scaffoldings. The floor was made of a dense steel mesh which

created net-shaped patterns on the cat's paws. Even though the mesh flooring was sturdy, the cat doctor trod carefully, following the serial numbers as he walked toward his destination.

When Meowie heard some noise, his white paws suddenly stopped.

He could hear a faint squelching sound echoing through the dark, empty, steel scaffolding. After listening to it for some time, Meowie Hu still couldn't figure out what that sound was. As the sound reverberated through the walls, he couldn't even tell where it was coming from. After a few minutes, the sound disappeared without any warning, just as mysteriously as it had started.

Seagral Square was made of all sorts of strange structures, so it wasn't all that extraordinary to hear some unusual sounds. The cat thought about it for a moment and continued toward the Corpse Disposal Collection Point.

He soon reached the particular resting spot where Lin Sanjiu and the two Souls were previously. A faint smell lingered in the air. It was so faint that humans might not detect it, but it was undoubtedly the smell of dead bodies.

"Oh!" Meowie Hu blurted delightedly once he sniffed that smell with his wet, pink nose. With that, he quickly sprinted behind the wall.

He had at least ten different experiments he wanted to conduct on those dead bodies. As a doctor who had basically learned on the job, he still hasn't figured out some of the internal biological systems. Even if he couldn't bring these corpses away immediately, he was satisfied just to cut open a body and familiarise himself with that feeling for just ten minutes.

The cat froze in his track when he saw the silhouette of a human amidst the darkness. As the cat also moved soundlessly, the human in a distance seemed unaware of the animal behind him or her. Meowie Hu stared at that person's back and twitched his whiskers.

He did not move and did not make a sound.

Somehow, even though he knew that humans couldn't resist his charm, he was somehow hesitant to approach that person. He looked around and lowered his tail. Treading soundlessly, he hid behind a corner and peeked with only his eyes and ears showing.

The person was at the far corner and was standing extremely close to one of the large body bins. The person's body was leaning forward as if he or she needed the support of the bin to even stand properly. Even though Meowie's eyes were fully dilated, he still could not see that person's face.

The person slowly lifted one of his arms with much effort and reached over to open the cover of the adjacent bin. His movements were... quite strange.

The bins behind him have all been opened. Meowie did not know if that man was the culprit. "Could this person be also searching for cadavers?" Meowie thought to himself.

Meowie Hu certainly didn't want the best cadavers to be taken away. Just as he was considering if he should approach that man, he saw a glove suddenly reaching out from the bin which the man was opening.

Perhaps, "reaching" wasn't the right word. It sort of wobbled out of the bin. The soft, skin-colored glove wobbled out of the bin and slowly grew longer. It was then that Meowie Hu realized that that was not a glove because it was followed by the saggy skin of a forearm.

In a short span of time, the skin suit slipped to the group. It sort of flopped into a pile on the ground. The man with the weird body movements carried a dead body out from the bin with his stiff movements strenuously. It was a proper dead body. He threw that body at the sack of skin. The skin seemed to come alive and swallowed the body in a split second. Once again, there were those squelching sounds.

Meowie's fur stood on end. As he was close to the origin of the sound, he finally knew what that sound resembled. It sounded like the sound of leather being stretched...

The pile of human suit disappeared in less than two minutes. After it "consumed" that body, the human suit slowly stood up, unsteadily.

The dead body belonged to a large bloke. After it had been swallowed by that human suit, all that remained was the stuff of nightmare fuel. The dead body was wearing another human face. Under the deformed eyeholes of that foreign human face, one could see the smashed in and destroyed features of the original dead body. As the foreign human face was not large enough, there were tears all over that piece of skin. Meanwhile, the substance within that dead body seemed to slowly disintegrate as if consumed from inside. From that opening, Meowie could see the contents of the dead body slowly melting away and filling up all the tears within the human suit and merging together with it.

The man seemed unfazed. When that man walked to another bin, the cat doctor saw that he was the same thing. However, that particular human suit was too large, so his skin gathered around all his joints. Thus, his movements were sluggish and his skin looked as if it would fall any second.

"Duoluozhong!" When those words surfaced in the cat doctor's mind, the second human suit which had just been filled suddenly made a cold, buzzing sound. The cat felt his heart palpitating. He quickly stood up but it was late.

"There's someone," the second person suddenly said with a dry, cracked voice. The cat doctor felt a black shadow looming overhead, it was heading directly toward its face. He quickly covered his face...

When that human skin with an intense stench touched his fur, Meowie Hu knew that he was in trouble. That thing did not seem

to be corrosive, yet, for some reason, he could feel that the fur on his back was melting into that human skin.

As he let out a terrified meow, Meowie Hu scrambled to press the straps of his backpack. The backpack which had been slightly corroded swung to the front of the cat's chest.

Everything was black. The cat had already been wrapped by the human skin. The human skin slowly tightened around him. The cat doctor didn't know what he managed to grab in this frantic situation. After some clattering sounds, his paw touched an item with a hard surface.

[Tomb Raider 2]

Run, Lara!

This is a Special Item with a description that seems off. The selling point of this game series is its female protagonist who explore various tombs. It had once been very popular. When it became a Special Item, it retained some features of the game.

Feature 1: No matter what kind of explosion or destruction erupts behind the user, no matter how bad the path is in front of the user, the user will always be able to escape.

Feature 2: Even if the user is buried under tiles and concrete or swallowed by a sandstorm, the user will always be able to climb out of it.

Feature 3: When the user is running, no bullet will hit the user.

Note: There is another series from the movie franchise which can ensure that the protagonist won't die. However, as it is too valuable, people usually just die from fighting over it.

Meowie Hu took a large breath of air. After struggling and regaining his freedom, Meowie Hu didn't care how many red crystals he dropped while he ran away at full speed with his four legs.

To Meowie's knowledge, though it was difficult to escape from duoluozhongs, his pursuers seemed slow. Perhaps, they still need some time to get used to their bodies. The two wobblings human suits chased after the cat doctor but soon fell further and further away from him.

Meowie threw a quick glance behind him and did not even dare to slow down for a second. He sprinted into an elevator and smashed the elevator's button rapidly. The door closed and the elevator slowly rose. Through the glass walls of the elevator, the cat watched as the two duoluozhongs wobbled and stopped some distance away. It was only then that he finally lay flat on the ground.

"What's with that?" After some time, the cat doctor noticed and rearranged his untidy bow. "The invaders in Red Nautilus had died out long ago. Why would there suddenly be duoluozhongs?"

However, there was no one in the elevator and, naturally, he couldn't get an answer. The cat rummaged through his backpack and took note of his losses. Suddenly, the elevator stopped and made a "ding" sound.

When the door open, a group of normal-looking posthumans walked into the elevator. There were around ten people in the group and they seemed to know each other. When they entered the elevator, they were talking to each other and did not seem to notice the cat in the corner of the elevator.

The cat doctor let out a sigh of relief. He was certainly scared by them but how could they be like those previous duoluozhongs.

But, his ears perked up when he heard their conversation.

"So, our queen want us to rush to the port?" a woman donning a scarf said softly.

Chapter 330: Welcome to the Amusement Park

"Ho Ho. In summary, you guys only have seven days. That is to say, if you don't look for me by the 26th, you won't get your prize... Do you understand what I have just said?"

Amidst the howling wind, Lin Sanjiu listened very carefully and gave Santa Claus her full attention without even a second of distraction. It was difficult to filter Santa Claus' voice from the loud waves, so she wasn't very sure if she had heard him properly.

She could not understand how the man could speak at such a time. The wind blowing against their faces was extremely strong and violent. It was as if they were assaulted by countless hammers. It was almost impossible to speak. Lin Sanjiu's exposed skin was sore because of the wind. The back of her hand, which she was using to protect her nose and mouth, was already red. She gripped the edge of the seat in front of her tightly. Her fingers had already been in that position for such a long time in the cold that she couldn't even stretch them now. However, she did not dare to let go. Even though her eyes were closed, tears involuntarily streamed from under the assault of the strong winds.

Each time a cold blast of air hit her body, it would steal some of her body heat. Lin Sanjiu had been shivering so much that her muscles ached badly. Despite that, her condition wasn't the worst. She did manage to catch a glimpse of another posthuman vomiting. The wind blew his own vomit all over his body. At that moment, the person, who was so sick that his face was green, was so anxious that he immediately took off his shirt and threw it away.

They were riding on Santa Claus' sleigh. No one knew what the consequences were if they dirtied it. Lin Sanjiu understood the man's action, but when she saw the half-naked man braving the

-10°C temperatures, she couldn't help cursing silently.

The beautiful golden sleigh they were on was at least three times larger than a normal sleigh. Santa Claus sat in his own special seat in front. There were a few long benches placed in the space behind him. Lin Sanjiu, Soulsqn, and the posthumans were sat on the benches in two rows. The benches had no back support and there were no handrails. The sleigh was not pulled by reindeers but instead propelled by an engine at the back. It did not have an awning nor a proper frame like an airship. As a result, it was very light and could travel at a speed of up to more than 200km/h.

In other words, it was almost as if Lin Sanjiu was sitting in a fighter jet without a cockpit cover flying at full speed. Even if she was a posthuman, it took quite a toll on her.

However, Santa Claus seemed unaffected. If it weren't for his beard flailing crazily in the wind, Lin Sanjiu might even suspect that his seat actually had anti-wind protection.

As the crazy, piercing wind blew at them, Lin Sanjiu didn't dare to say a single word. It was as if the wind had blown even her thoughts away. After enduring this torture for some unknown length of time, the direction of the wind changed and sped up again. The sleigh descended suddenly from 4500 meters off the ground. There wasn't anything under them except the deep, crystal blue ocean. If they fell from this height, the surface tension of the water was enough to kill them. Screams erupted beside her as Lin Sanjiu felt her heart almost leaping out from her throat.

However, the sleight was falling so quickly that before Lin Sanjiu could do anything to save herself, the edge of the golden sleigh had already touched the surface of the water. The downward thrust created an outward wave. The ocean churned with white foams as if eagerly waiting to consume these people and bury them at the bottom of the ocean.

Everything became calm the very next second.

"Huh... Huh?"

It took some time before the passengers started to calm themselves and regain their composure from their near-death experience. "Where are we?" their voices were filled with confusion and lingering fear.

Lin Sanjiu's heart was still racing. Her heart was beating so loudly that she couldn't hear anything else. She slowly looked up and surveyed her surroundings. The soothing gentle breeze that washed over them seemed like a completely different creature compared to the previous insane gale. The waves lapped the rocky shores. The sound of the waves had a calming, meditative rhythm. Lin Sanjiu supported herself with the sides of the sleigh and climbed out. Her legs felt weak and everything seemed unreal... but the gravels on the ground under her feet were as real as can be.

Santa Claus had already gotten off the sleigh before them. From the back, Lin Sanjiu could see that his head was tilted slightly upward as if he was looking somewhere afar. He didn't move.

Following his gaze, Lin Sanjiu froze on the spot. For a second, she couldn't process what she saw.

She saw a 3D castle-shaped entrance arch with a bright orange-yellow and dark blue theme. Rows of star-shaped lights hung from the top of the "castle", mixing with the Ivies on the castle wall. Their warm light was still somewhat visible in broad daylight. There were balloons of every color; a crisp tinkling sound of bells; the sweet smell of popcorn permeated the air. This was all packed under a label—a colorful name of the location written with neon alphabets:

"Starry Carnival Amusement Park? What is that?"

An androgynous voice sounded beside her. Lin Sanjiu turned and looked at the source, seeing Soulsqn staring curiously ahead while restoring the skin on her face which had been distorted by the wind.

"I didn't expect that there would be a pocket dimension here..." Lin Sanjiu mumbled softly and looked straight ahead once more. The three other posthumans stepped forward and also stood not far from her.

This was the reason why Santa Claus drove the sleigh directly downwards as if he was trying to kill all of them. It was just a way to enter this pocket dimension. Lin Sanjiu wondered what sort of near-death experience had the first person who found this pocket dimension.

Just as the group of people stared at the "Starry Carnival Amusement Park" with puzzled looks, Santa Claus suddenly turned around. His actions shocked the posthumans back to reality. When the tall, old man stood in front of them, he was just like a small mountain. His huge shadow loomed over them.

"I have already told you what you need to take note of during our little journey here. I trust that you good kids will have no problems, right?"

Someone gulped loudly.

Santa Claus' gaze swept across the four posthumans and he narrowed his eyes. Each time he narrowed his eyes, they would form two perfect arches and it was extremely creepy-looking.

"Okay, I want all of you to enter from that entrance now," his thick, rich voice drifted into each of their ears softly in the strangest way. "Once you enter the amusement, regardless of the situation inside, I want you to go as far as you can and come back to me with information. Hohoho."

"If you want to know, why don't you enter the amusement park yourself?" Just as this thought surfaced in Lin Sanjiu's mind, Santa Claus spoke again.

"Listen up. What I will say next is the most important point," as Santa Claus lifted his beard, Lin Sanjiu felt her abdomen

tightening and she couldn't help but give him her full attention.

"No matter who you meet inside," Santa Claus pointed at the three posthumans except Lin Sanjiu, "you have to declare that you are a Growth-type and that you belong to Progressor Alliance."

Even though the three posthumans had their qualms, they immediately nodded furiously.

"Next, you need to tell them that the Growth-type posthuman that Puppeteer is chasing after is called Lin Sanjiu and that she is in the amusement park. Then, you will give them the coordinates of her location to that person."

Before Lin Sanjiu could even show a shocked expression, Santa Claus turned to her and tossed a stack of paper cranes at her. "As for you, you must inform the others of your location each time you go to a new place."

Though his sentence was short, it held a huge amount of information. Lin Sanjiu took at least two seconds to react to and understand what he had just said.

"The members of the Progressor Alliance are here? Are they related to Puppeteer?" Even though Lin Sanjiu clearly knew that the man in front of her wasn't a good person to get answers to these questions, she just blurted out questions after question. "Do you want me to get caught by Puppeteer?"

She said those words hurriedly and urgently and sounded very impolite. By then, the other posthumans were looking at her as if she was already dead.

Lin Sanjiu felt a chill down her spine when she noticed the way Santa Claus was staring at her. Thankfully, that man did not take action despite her transgressions.

"Next time, I will find a different kid to help Santa Claus out," he said with a friendly, gentle voice. "Take this. When Puppeteer catches you, your mission would be over. Naturally, I will give you

your present then."

Lin Sanjiu felt a drop of cold sweat rolling down her back. She reached out for the item and looked down at it. It was a small magnet in the shape of a green santa hat. It was like those common refrigerator magnets.

After a few minutes, the group of Growth-type posthumans and Soulsqn found themselves standing right in front of the entrance of Starry Carnival Amusement Park.

A strange and sinister Santa Claus, a man they could not rebel against, stood behind them. An unknown pocket dimension, that Santa Claus wasn't even willing to enter himself, was right in front of them.

When Lin Sanjiu took the first step past the castle-shaped entrance arch, the faces of the three posthumans behind her turned ashen gray.

Soulsqn quickly followed behind her with quick steps. Looking around and seeing that the others were not following, she quickly whispered to Lin Sanjiu, "There is a little hiccup with your plan."

"Why?"

"AYU had already gathered more Souls. With her included, there are sixteen Souls. When they reached the port, we were on the sleigh so I told them to look for an airship and come over... However, they seemed stuck at the port. I have commanded them quite a few times, but they just aren't moving. I think they can't find any transportation that would bring them here."

Lin Sanjiu frowned. She wanted to say something but she suddenly stopped. The entrance arch wasn't that thick, so she had already walked into the amusement park.

"Welcome to Starry Carnival Amusement Park! This is just a friendly reminder, but please take note of your own safety when you are on our rides!"

Chapter 331: Look Out! A Chapter Full Of Background Information

The amusement park was filled with a happy upbeat tune which was unfamiliar to Lin Sanjiu. Every now and then, there was the sound of chiming bells. The sweet scent of fried ice-cream and cotton candy filled the air. Under the bright sun, the whole place had a lively, cheerful atmosphere like a carnival. Balloons of different colors bobbed in mid-air. They didn't fly away but hovered around the height of people's shoulder level. Occasionally, some of them would get caught in a tree and a few gray pigeons would burst them with noisy popping sounds.

If it weren't for the unsettling lack of human voices, this would seem like a good amusement park.

Well, it wasn't exactly as though there were no humans voices around at all. When the three other posthumans followed behind her, Lin Sanjiu heard the welcome message at the entrance coming from the speakers, "Welcome to Starry Carnival Amusement Park..."

The sound wasn't loud but it seemed to come from every direction. Lin Sanjiu looked up and noticed two announcement speakers attached to the cartoon light fixture at both sides of the entrance.

The half-naked man in their group had downward sloping eyebrows which made him look worried all the time. After looking around, the half-naked man ran up to a large puppet—taller than the size of a human—which provided directions within the amusement park. He took off the black bear's vest it was wearing and quickly wore it.

The brunette, who was new to the Twelve Worlds Centrum, frowned and ignored the other posthumans. Without saying a word, she chose the "Psyduck Route" without asking anyone and

continued down that path.

"Well, let's split up here and try our best to let her get caught by Puppeteer. Otherwise, this thing will never end and we'll always be on tenterhooks," the man in the black bear's vest said to the young man in their group. He acted as if Lin Sanjiu wasn't even there with them.

Lin Sanjiu gave them a cold glare before she turned and walked away. She chose a path with a green frog symbol. There was a field of green grass on one side of the route. As the sun baked the green field, a smell of green grass and soil rose to the air. There was even an ice-cream van right in the middle of the field and Lin Sanjiu could hear the tinkling sounds from the vehicle. The atmosphere around her was light-hearted and carefree. This really made it very hard for her to imagine that she was in a pocket dimension.

However, Lin Sanjiu was bothered by the ice-cream van right now. After just taking a few steps, she slowed down. There was a brown noticeboard, half the height of a human, right in the middle of the frog path. It was difficult to ignore this particular obstruction.

"Starry Carnival Amusement Park's Rules and Notice."

These large and bold words were the title of the noticeboard. It immediately drew Lin Sanjiu's attention and she quickly walked closer.

"We extend a warm welcome to our dear No.56 and No.58 player. We are honored to have you visit our amusement park today. To ensure that all players can safely enjoy all sorts of entertainment and rides our amusement park provides with fun and laughter, we had created these rules. Please remember and abide by our rules so that we can create a wonderful experience at Starry Carnival Amusement Park together."

The noticeboard was not digital. It was just a printed notice behind a sheet of glass. On top of that, Lin Sanjiu had just entered

the amusement park ten minutes ago. However, the notice seemed to be tailored specifically for two people. They had even listed their names at the bottom of the notice. There was a photo of Lin Sanjiu under the words Player No. 56 and a photo of Soulsqn under the words Player No. 58. Considering the angle of the photos, they were probably taken when they just entered the amusement park.

"How did I become a player?" Soulsqn felt a little displeased as she made some sort of hissing sound from her throat. "Our collaboration only involves us taking care of Puppeteer for you and then you bringing us to your friend. Going through this strange pocket dimension with you isn't within our agreement."

"Since I have no choice but to be here, you will just have to follow. There is nothing more to discuss." Lin Sanjiu replied casually as she turned her gaze back at the noticeboard. No matter how aggrieved or unhappy Soulsqn felt about the situation, she really couldn't bring herself to let go out the opportunity that Lin Sanjiu offered. In terms of combat, the Souls' specialty was also useless against Lin Sanjiu. Since Lin Sanjiu held an advantage over the Souls in all aspects, she naturally wasn't afraid that Soulsqn would try to create any trouble for her.

As expected, Soulsqn stared at the noticeboard moodily and stepped closer to the notice as if she finally relented. Lin Sanjiu was currently still reading the notice. When she sensed Soulsqn moving closer to the noticeboard, her lips curled slightly. She swept her gaze across the words on the notice.

"Our amusement park has already been operating for 5 months. We had adopted a new 'Stamina Point' system to make your experience more enriching and interesting. Many of our players gave us rave reviews. For the rules regarding how you can use your Stamina Points, please read below."

Even though Lin Sanjiu didn't know what those "Stamina Points" were, but from the amusement park's emphasis on safety, this pocket dimension might not be too—

Lin Sanjiu suddenly killed that thought halfway.

"The most important function of these Stamina Points is they can help you stay alive. Every player in our amusement park would automatically get 15 points when they first enter. Each day you spend in the amusement park (the area starts from beyond the castle door) would cost you 10 points. If the player does not have at least 10 points, the amusement park staff would take away a body part from the player to make up for the difference. If a player reaches 0 points, the player's entire body—which equates to the player's life, would be taken as the 10 points."

Even though there were many differences, Lin Sanjiu couldn't help remembering about the pocket dimension in the previous world which involved the number of lives the player had. Uncontrollably, her expression grew grim.

"However, the main aim of our amusement park is to bring fun and joy to our customers. Dead customers are certainly not going to be very happy... Therefore, if a player leaves the amusement park before their Stamina Points get depleted, there will be no consequences. If the player chooses to enter the amusement park again, the player's Stamina Points would return to the original 15 Stamina Points, regardless the number of points the player retained in his or her previous play.

"For example, Player A might only have 8 points left at the end of the day (12 am is the beginning of a new day). If he/she chooses to stay for a second day to challenge any of the rides, he/she would definitely lose an arm. The exact loss would be determined by the staff depending on the situation. If player A chooses not to lose his/her arm and exits the amusement park, he/she can enter the next day with 15 Stamina Points."

"The door of the amusement park is only opened from 10 am to 3 pm every day. Players who aim to exit the amusement park before the end of the day should take note of this time."

"If this is the case, wouldn't those Stamina Points be quite useless? A person can quickly exit the park once their Stamina Point falls below 10 points—" Lin Sanjiu thought to herself.

"However, players who re-enter the amusement have to start from the first attraction on their route irrespective of the door or route they choose. A player can only proceed to the next attraction on his/her route have he/she has successfully completed a particular attraction. If a player attempts to bypass any of the attractions, a staff member would mete out an appropriate punishment."

"From the looks of things, the 'fun factor' of each attraction must be the main point of the attractions..." Lin Sanjiu thought to herself and continued reading.

"Aside from that, Stamina Points are extremely useful. If a player wishes to play any of the attractions, the player would have to pay an entrance fee (this typically costs 5 Stamina Point). Additionally, players can use their Stamina Points to buy cotton candies, popcorn, hot dogs, sodas, souvenirs... This includes all sort of small useful supplies."

"If you enter an attraction but don't feel like continuing, what should you do? A player can forcefully exit from the attraction and pay the penalty of 80 Stamina Points. To take care of the entire family, from the elderly to the young ones, players can also transfer their Stamina Points. You can make your inquiries about Stamina Points and the trading system at the touchscreen in front of each attraction."

"How can you earn Stamina Points? Please try out all our attractions proactively! Each time you win a round, you can earn 5 Stamina Points. If you complete a particular attraction, you will get an additional 20 Stamina Points! However, if you lose, you will not get prizes. After all, it would be best if you visit a doctor after that."

"After reading this little introduction, I guess Players No. 56 and 58 should be more familiar with how Stamina Points work, right? If that is the case, please embark on your happy and delightful Starry Carnival Amusement Park journey! After you complete all the attractions along a single route, you would enter the final pitstop. Players who can survive the final attraction would get a mysterious gift from Starry God! Deducting the Stamina Points for today, each of you has exactly 5 points! On the behalf of all the staff, we are all very eager to see how many more points you can earn from that!"

That was the end of the general explanation about the amusement park and the Stamina Points system.

There was a simplified map of the amusement park at the bottom of the explanations. When Lin Sanjiu looked at it, she knew she didn't have to bother remembering the map.

There were a total of four entrances. Each entrance led to a sector of the amusement park. Every sector had four routes. There were a total of 16 different routes. The routes were demarcated from each other with a dark black line to show that a player cannot cross between the routes. The 16 independent routes all lead to the final pitstop which was a building at the center of the amusement park.

"The term 'remote' isn't even good enough to describe how secluded this location is. Unless someone specifically looked for this place, that person would never accidentally stumble across this place. If so many people spent so much effort to get here, it must probably be because of the final prize at the last pitstop?" Lin Sanjiu straightened her back and thought about the 5 Stamina Points she had right now. She walked away from the noticeboard and looked at the 'Frog Route' she was on.

Lin Sanjiu saw the entrance of an arena with a large gray awning a few hundred meters ahead. Lin Sanjiu wished that the arena was the last pitstop even though she knew it definitely wasn't.

The words "Bumper Karts" graced the top of the entrance.

Chapter 332: Bumper Karts And A Second Round

Lin Sanjiu would have never guessed that "Bumper Karts" was just a normal game station with bumper karts. Even after having some difficulties fitting her wings behind her as she sat in a small, electrical bumper kart, she found it hard to believe that this was as innocent as it looked. Lin Sanjiu gripped the steering wheel of the bumper kart tightly while she braced herself for any announcements regarding the strange rules to this ride.

Undeniably, this was still a pocket dimension.

The rows of lights which hung from the ceiling lit the large bumper kart arena evenly. The size of the bumper kart rink was at least ten times larger than a normal one. The smooth gray floor was covered with multiple white scratches left behind by the bumper karts. A few dozen bumper karts were parked at the edges of the rinks as if they were also waiting for the ride to start. However, other than the bumper karts that Lin Sanjiu and Soulsqn were riding on respectively, the remaining bumper karts were empty.

"Do they want just both our bumper karts to collide?" As this thought surfaced in Lin Sanjiu's mind, she shot a quick glance at the "staff" standing at the entrance of the attraction. The staff was an old woman who was wearing a badly-manufactured F1 driver's uniform. Leaning lazily against the entrance's metal door, the old woman was just looking outside. It took quite a while before the woman turned her head and yelled toward the bumper kart rink with indifference, "There are no other players joining, we can start now."

Following which, the old woman pressed something near the door. Lin Sanjiu immediately heard the bumper kart whirring to life.

"The rules are simple. If you can survive the first round, you will win," the old woman seemed unconcerned about the shock factor of her own words. Without even announcing how long one round would last, the old woman planted her face into her arms and actually decided to take a nap on the spot.

"Survive—?" Before Lin Sanjiu could contemplate about what those words actually meant, the dozens of empty bumper karts around them started moving.

"Don't let them hit you!" Lin Sanjiu yelled out urgently just as a yellow bumper kart raced directly toward her. She spun the steering wheel and her small blue kart instantly swerved to one side against the smooth floor surface. The brakes screeched as Lin Sanjiu stepped on the brakes, but the bumper kart continued skidding with a swoosh at an alarming speed.

"You're just stating the obvious!" Soulsqn yelped and quickly drove in the opposite direction. The empty bumper karts spread themselves throughout the rink and surrounded Lin Sanjiu and Soulsqn from all directions. At that moment, both Soul and human wished that they had eyes behind their back so that could watch out for all the bumper karts.

Lin Sanjiu had actually activated her [Higher Consciousness Scan] the moment her bumper kart could move. With that slight advantage, she dodged three bumper karts which headed toward her at the same time. With a creaking sound, Lin Sanjiu barely dodged the fourth bumper kart which scrapped past her vehicle.

When her eyes swept past the pink bumper kart, Lin Sanjiu almost couldn't process what she saw.

"The words just now... they are..." she even called out to Mrs. Manas to get her confirmation, "Princess Bubbles?"

"Yes," Mrs. Manas replied impatiently, "Don't talk to me. Just maintain your [Higher Consciousness Scan] and [Defence Forcefield]!"

Lin Sanjiu immediately kept quiet. Mrs. Manas' advice wasn't the only reason. The two bumper karts which she had just escaped from were now turning back and chasing after her again. They were so fast that they were almost reaching the rear of her kart. Like sharks attracted to blood, karts of different color rushed out from all directions, surrounding Lin Sanjiu's kart. They accelerated toward her. Lin Sanjiu twisted her head and her blue bumper kart swerved in the same direction. Just when she was about to get caught between the karts in front and behind her, she slipped out from their formation just in time.

Crash.

Her kart hit a purple bumper kart that she did not notice previously.

The impact of the collision was much greater than she had expected. Just as her arm became numb, she heard a pleasant female voice coming from the opposite kart. It seemed pre-recorded, "Collision with a purple bumper kart. Delirium effect, 5 seconds."

At the same time, Lin Sanjiu finally read the words on that kart: "Detrimental to mental health".

"What happened?!" Soulsqn shouted from the other end of the rink.

Of course, Lin Sanjiu did not have the time to reply. The bumper karts behind her stopped for a brief moment when the announcement was made. However, the moment the announcement ended, Lin Sanjiu heard the engine sounds of seven to eight bumper karts heading her way.

Before Lin Sanjiu could consider about that "delirium effect", she stared at the steering wheel in her hand and decided to dodge from the yellow bumper kart on her left first—

However, the yellow bumper kart did not move.

"Huh? Is it spoilt? " Lin Sanjiu was stunned. Even though she had turned the steering wheel all the way, the bumper kart did not move in the direction she wanted this time. Instead, it moved slowly backward. A few bumper karts quickly approached.

After the blue bumper kart spun around violent for a few times in the same spot and against the laws of physics bounced for a while, no matter how dense she was, Lin Sanjiu figured out what had happened.

"F*ck! Delirium means losing control of this kart?" Lin Sanjiu swore as her body shook violently with the bumper kart. "Damn it. Another kart!"

When the previous pink bumper kart charged directly toward her with a sharp screech, Lin Sanjiu's bumper kart was still "dancing" its jig. Seeing that she had no other options, she didn't care if was flouting the rules, she gritted her teeth and extended her wings downward. As her wings hit the floor, she lifted the blue bumper kart and barely pulled it away from the vicious claws of the pink bumper kart. Losing balance, Lin Sanjiu's bumper kart rolled sideways while she was in it.

Luckily, it had already been five seconds. Lin Sanjiu quickly propped herself, then pushed her blue bumper kart back to a normal position with a single hand and steadied herself again.

It was only then that she realized that her surroundings were a little too quiet.

At that moment, she was right in the middle of a circle of bumper karts. The bumper karts which surrounded her were all bright yellow. Meanwhile, the pink bumper kart was slowly reversing backward and out from the encirclement.

The five yellow bumper karts remained in the same position without any movements. A female voice suddenly rang out, it was impossible to tell which of the yellow bumper kart broadcasted that announcement.

"The yellow bumper karts have successfully surrounded the target. Onion Ring effect, 3 seconds."

An intense pain spread from the tips of Lin Sanjiu's toes to her entire body. It felt as though she had been thrown into a vat of boiling oil.

When Lin Sanjiu's beast-like cries of pain echoed through the arena, Soulsqn finally slipped up. Before she could react, Soulsqn's bumper kart had been assaulted by a gray and a red bumper kart. Her bumper kart was stuck in the middle. The bumper karts made their announcements at the same time, two messages spoken with a pleasant female voice rang out simultaneously, making them difficult to discern.

"Collision with a gray bumper kart. Soft pillow effect. 10 seconds."

"Collision with a red bumper kart, Vampire's First Embrace effect. 3 seconds."

"The two bumper karts of different colors had created a combo, Intense Rivalry effect. 5 seconds."

Soulsqn had been gripping her steering wheel very tightly. At that moment, both her hands suddenly shriveled as if they had been drained in an almost indescribable way. It was as if the substance or whatever that had been supporting that layer of skin had been drained away quickly. They quickly became wrinkled, dried piece of skin. The skin laid on the steering wheel in layers, they fluttered like pieces of leather. However, Soulsqn's screams were stuck in her throat. A sort of safety airbag burst out from the steering wheel and wrapped her entire head. The white bumper kart she was on was rapidly being flattened. As the shape of her bumper kart changed, Soulsqn's body was also placed under the same extreme force. Parts of her skin started splitting.

"Ah, one minute is up." The old woman suddenly lifted her face from her arms. She looked at the arena listlessly. Then, she

pressed a bell.

The bumper karts instantly stopped moving. Lin Sanjiu struggled to get out of her bumper kart. She felt as if her panting was so loud that anyone in the pocket dimension could hear. Drops of blood oozed out from the pores all over her body. Lin Sanjiu wiped her face and staggered as she walked over and pulled Soulsqn out from the wreckage.

If the substances which made up Soulsqn's body had not been drained by that "Vampire's First Embrace", Soulsqn's face would also have been ruined. Despite that, when Lin Sanjiu pulled Soulsqn out from her deformed bumper kart, the gruesome state of her body was simply hair-raising. Half of her face was flaccid, as her lower face under her nose was just a floppy piece of skin. Instead of her normal-looking limbs, her body was just a loose empty skin which clung on the Soul's original smaller body like an oversized suit.

"Alright. You have gotten your 5 Stamina Points," the old woman said apathetically. "Do you want to join the next round?"

"What next round?" Lin Sanjiu struggled to reach the door of the arena. She froze when she heard what that old woman said and tossed Soulsqn to the ground.

"That was just the first round of 'Bumper Karts'. There is a total of three rounds," the old woman looked at Soulsqn with her heavy-laden eyes. "The next round is three times harder than the first round. You don't have to pay for the entrance fee. Do you want to start the round now?"

"No! Don't!" Soulsqn squirmed and raised her head. Shockingly, she could still speak. She screeched and suddenly attacked Lin Sanjiu with her "reality".

Lin Sanjiu was physically and mentally exhausted after that first round of Bumper Karts so she was totally unprepared for Soulsqn's sudden attack. It struck her directly. A flash of lightning appeared

near her feet, she tumbled away artlessly and dodged the attack. Next, she immediately summoned her [Nostradamus's Card]. When the battery on her card showed a charge of 5%, Lin Sanjiu looked up and realized that Soulsqn was already stumbling toward the exit.

"Stop!" she roared. The humanoid shape made of layers of skin finally stopped. "If you stay, I will help you. If you don't, I might as well kill you!"

Soulsqn turned her head around slowly. Somehow, despite her half-melted face, she could still show a hint of disbelief.

"Are you going to continue to the second round?" Soulsqn asked sneeringly. "If you want to die, what you said about helping me is just bullsh*t."

Lin Sanjiu took a deep breath. When she spoke again, her voice was filled with defeat:

"No. I really don't want to just give up, but I'm not stupid... It is not 2 pm yet, we can still get out of the amusement park. Once we are prepared, we can try again."

Chapter 333: Let Me Show You The Power Of Popularity

The wharf at Northeby Port had not been peaceful in the past few days.

Two days ago, a group of people arrived at Northeby Port in a hurry and did not leave. They loitered all day at the wharf, throwing gloomy glances at the passengers of the airships passing by.

They had harassed the captains and owners of every single airship that had stopped at the port, from people using private Special Items to all forms of commercial airships. According to the grapevine, these people were planning to head west but did not have an exact location. The group consisted of ten plus people yet none of them could accurately describe the place they wanted to go. As a result, even the few airship captains who were willing to do business with them had to regrettably reject them.

As time passed, the group of people grew impatient. Somehow, they managed to sneak into quite a few airships. If the other passersby did not notice the few unconscious airship captains in the water, those men would have died. However, none of the people in the group could fly an airship so they had to get off the airship begrudgingly. They continued squatting around the wharf, giving people the heebie-jeebies when they stared.

"What should we do? Our queen is no longer within my detectable range," a man with long, narrow eyes asked for the umpteenth time as he pushed his fringe away from his eyes.

AYU let out a low, guttural, extraterrestrial roar. It was obvious that she was angry because she was feeling very frustrated. "Silverdale, can you say something we don't know?!"

The Souls as a species consisted of normal Souls who did not have

any abilities and Souls with their own specialized functional skills. After returning to the Cyber District, AYU had brought the other specialized Souls with human suits back to the Free District with her. Silverdale, the Soul wearing a suit with long and narrow eyes, could sense the queen if she was within a 100km radius.

"Well, I think waiting here pointlessly is not going to work," a woman with a thick scarf spoke. If Lin Sanjiu was around, she would be astonished and definitely identify her as Sajee, "Why don't we catch another person who can pilot an airship?"

A few Souls shot sidelong glances at her without replying. They had already tried that option. They kidnapped a captain last night and tried to get him to pilot his airship. Unfortunately, their illusions could not make the captain listen and cooperate with them willingly. On top of that, as they could not pinpoint the location of the place they wanted to go, the airship captain flew the airship and pretended to be compliant before he made his crafty escape using a Special Item. Before the Souls realized that something was wrong, the airship started shaking and sparks flew everywhere. They found out that the airship captain was missing only when the airship plunged into the ocean.

When they emerged from the ocean, dripping wet, two of the Souls had lost their human suits. Before they could find other suitable human suits, the two of them had to be fully wrapped with cloths. These two Souls were now like two ghosts which followed the group.

Due to their strange appearances, almost no posthumans dared to walk within a 100-meter radius.

"From your conversations, I think you need a little help from me... my friends," a sweet voice suddenly rang out. Sajee, who was standing in front of the group, suddenly leaped up. She looked around but couldn't find the person speaking. That was until AYU lowered her head and exclaimed angrily, "Why did it follow us!"

A cat with ruffled fur sat quietly on the ground staring at them with his bright emerald eyes. His fur was of uneven length as if it had been gnawed by something.

The bow on his neck had been washed and now shone brilliantly like a red ruby. His damaged backpack had already been repaired. The hole in the backpack had been patched with a picture of a majestic crown. According to the posthuman who had done this for him, she felt that the royal theme matched Dr. Hu very well, so she specifically designed it for him. His usually beautiful whiskers looked a little scraggly but they wouldn't grow out in a short time.

Just as Meowie Hu had expected, these group of strange people was unaffected by his charm. One of them even started to open his mouth wide. The cat was not startled by this. He quickly pressed the strap on his backpack and lowered his head swiftly. When he looked up again, half his round cat face was already covered by a face mask.

At almost the same time, that Soul's pheromones hit the air. However, unlike the previous time, the cat doctor did not pass out but blinked at them with his large eyes while he wore his mask. After all, he had learned from his mistake.

"So, you've come here prepared," AYU held back her fellow kinsperson and questioned the cat skeptically, "Why are you following us?"

The cat doctor shook his whiskers and stuck his head up a little, appearing to be slightly haughty.

"I've been following your group for such a long time that I already understand... Unfortunately, we both want to head to the same destination," the cat doctor's voice was a little hard to hear as he spoke through his mask. However, his enunciation was as clear as ever. "Actually, I can just board an airship and leave you guys behind. But, I've decided to reply animosity with kindness, so I'm going to help you out a little."

"What do you mean?" AYU stared at him cautiously.

Ever since they left Seagal Square, this talking cat had been stalking them. As the Souls illusions only worked on humans and they weren't much stronger than humans, they were evenly matched with the cat. Without much of a choice, the Souls released their precious pheromones and escaped the cat. Yet, none of them expected that the cat would find them after less than two days.

If it weren't for their unusual ability, Meowie Hu would want to destroy the faces of all the people in that group. Meeting Lin Sanjiu who wasn't affected by his charm was one thing. However, he couldn't stand that these ten plus people, who seemed somewhat non-human, could resist his influence and even made him unconscious. Luckily, the "charm and brilliance" of Dr. Hu worked even when he was unconscious so he was rescued by a passing posthuman.

When a person came close to Meowie Hu, they would be charmed unless Meowie Hu attacked them directly. There was no real limitation to his particular ability. Humans who had seen him would voluntarily be his guide, his wallet, his sewing machine, and his radar. With the enthusiastic help from so many people, Meowie Hu took almost no effort to locate this group of people.

After people heard that the cat had escaped from a dangerous situation, the cat's little backpack was now twice the size as it was before.

"Oh well, since you people are so unpopular, you naturally don't understand what I mean," Meowie sighed, showing his pity. He looked to AYU and said, "Follow and watch me."

He turned around and took a few steps while he took off his mask. The cat doctor had his eyes on a captain who was standing at the other end of the wharf. The captain was standing with her two crew members and was guarding his small airship as she watched the group of Souls warily.

However, when they blatantly walked toward the captain, a fight did not break out, unlike what AYU anticipated. When the cat doctor reached a certain distance from the female captain, she suddenly stepped forward to welcome him. Then, AYU watched the whole situation like she had seen a ghost when the captain knelt on the ground with a thud in front of the cat and spoke to the cat reverently, "Dear Doctor, how are you? I see that you're with that group of people. Are you in trouble, sir?"

"Hello. Hello. I appreciate your concern, but I am currently very safe..." the cat raised his paw and waved his little pink paw pad in a very leader-like manner, "I have something I would like to ask you, captain."

"Please go ahead, sir."

"Well, it's like this. I... and this person want to head west out to the ocean. There is a pocket dimension there but we aren't quite sure of its location. Could you tell me where I could find an airship that is heading in that direction?"

Other than adding "pocket dimension" to his question, AYU and the others had already asked many people the same question. Perhaps, they were a little too crude when they were asking for direction, but she was sure that that captain did not know—

"Please give us the honor to have you onboard our airship!" The airship captain replied eagerly, "I have heard of this pocket dimension before, but I only have a rough impression of where it is. If you don't mind, please let me bring you out to the ocean and we'll search for it?"

"If only there was someone that knew the exact location..." Meowie Hu maintained his elegant demeanor even when he was being very demanding. "Oh," the cat said, looking a little troubled as if he was thinking about something. AYU couldn't wait any longer. She quickly said to the cat, "Let her fly the airship! Once we're near, we have someone that can naturally detect its

location."

"Ah, since that's the case, we would have to trouble you, captain," Meowie Hu gave the captain a graceful nod. The woman suddenly blushed with excitement.

This conundrum which had lasted for two days was solved by the cat in just ten minutes. When AYU informed the other Souls to board the airship, every single one of them had a look of slight disbelief.

"Maybe, we have chosen the wrong skin," Silverdale mumbled to another Soul. "If we wore cat skins, maybe, we could also do this."

The cat doctor's hearing was much better than humans'. He was shocked when he heard what they said. He leaped up and his tail bristled. He stared at the group of people suspiciously for quite a while, just when he was wondering if he should continue on this journey with them, AYU walked toward him.

"Why are you helping us? What do you want?"

To the Souls, the need to quickly reproduce and create the second generation was carved into their genes. Soulsqn was the only one who could possibly help their species fulfill this. As a result, finding and protecting their queen was a mission that every Soul had. Just when they were on the edge of despair, they had received this unexpected help. Under such circumstances, AYU couldn't help feeling suspicious no matter how relieved she felt.

"A few of my friends are in a bit of trouble there. As you can see, I am really small and I don't know how to fight... I think I will need help from all of you."

Even though the Souls did not have the same emotions and affections like humans, AYU nodded and before she turned around she added, "If it doesn't affect us much, we'll help you out."

When she turned around, the cat crooked his head. His large eyes

were sparkingly. "What's under that human skin... what will it look like dissected? " he thought to himself.

Chapter 334: Meeting An Old Friend

When Lin Sanjiu walked out of the Bumper Karts attraction, blood had stopped oozing from her pores. As many of her epidermal capillaries had been damaged, huge red patches appeared all over her honey-colored skin. She probably would never forget the feeling of being fried like an 'onion ring'.

However, compared to Soulsqn, she looked much better.

Lin Sanjiu held the area which was once Soulsqn's neck and dragged her forward. She felt goosebumps on her skin. She was holding something hard beneath that skin. The layers of skin and human hair had swallowed her hand. The feeling of that soft, shapeless skin wrapping around her hand was very uncomfortable.

"You tried to attack me yet I'm bringing you out of the amusement park..." Lin Sanjiu gave a soft cold laugh. When she spotted Soulsqn looking downward, she continued, "If you Souls have even a bit of conscience, you shouldn't let me waste my worries on you."

Soulsqn remained slumped in her hand without saying a word. Lin Sanjiu did not know what she was thinking.

If Lin Sanjiu was alone, she felt that she could go for the next round... However, she found no point in risking her life.

The first round was already very dangerous. If she did manage to complete the second round, she probably would be half-dead. What would she do then? Continue with the third round which was three times harder?

She was tossed into Starry Carnival Amusement Park by Santa Claus so she could be bait for Puppeteer. The only reason why she wanted to continue down the route was so that she could find Reno and Rena. If she hurt herself badly, she wouldn't have a chance of rescuing the kids from Puppeteer. With that in mind, it was clearer

to her that it was a much better choice to exit and think of a better strategy. Just like the fact that every ability had a limitation, there should be a way to survive every pocket dimension.

Just as before, there wasn't any sound of human conversations on Frog Route. They could only hear the tinkling sound of music weaving through the air along with the balloons that bobble to their beat. Somehow that spirited atmosphere seemed to further emphasize the sense of alienation and solitude.

Set against this strange silence, hearing a human voice from the middle of the grass field was like a thunderbolt out of nowhere.

"I want a scoop of chocolate toffee and a scoop of rum and raisin."

Lin Sanjiu turned her head slowly and coincidentally locked eyes with the customer who was buying ice cream. That person seemed to have already known that another human was approaching, however, unlike Lin Sanjiu who was cautious about the risks of meeting someone who might pose a danger to her, he clearly felt that buying ice cream was important.

"Um? I think I've seen you before."

While Lin Sanjiu stared speechlessly at the other person, he already raised his brow.

Even if Lin Sanjiu was now almost 1.8m, the man in a black robe was a head taller than her. His muscles were well-defined and sharply sculpted, quietly possessing incredible strength and power. There was a depth in his eyes that seemed to be forged through countless bloodbaths. Every fiber of his being revealed a steel-like will which had been tempered by destruction and bloodshed.

The katana on his back was nowhere to be seen but the aura that Hei Zeji exuded had never been more dangerous.

"Thank you for your patronage. It will be 30 Stamina points," the ice cream truck owner handed Hei Zeji his order after a 'ding' sound. After he took the ice cream, Hei Zeji turned around to face

Lin Sanjiu. She couldn't help feeling a sense of relief. Holding an ice cream cone in each hand did soften his image considerably.

"It's me," Lin Sanjiu replied. She never would have imagined that she would improve so much. She felt that she was no longer that 'weak sh*t' that couldn't even stand properly in front of him previously. "Have you forgotten? When we were in Hyperthermal Hell, you and Li Zhijun saved me and my friends... I didn't expect to meet you here!"

As she spoke, she couldn't help finding the situation a bit funny. Each time they met, they were in a pocket dimension.

"Oh, I remembered," he only recalled what had happened after he heard Lin Sanjiu describe the pocket dimension. "So, you're Lin Sanjiu. That is the reason why your name sounds so familiar."

From the looks of it, Hei Zeji had already forgotten what Lin Sanjiu looked like originally. He didn't seem surprised by her current appearance either. With his two large ice cream cones, he strode toward her. Once he moved, Soulsqn immediately started trembling. She started struggling as if she wanted to run away but Lin Sanjiu held her with a tight grip.

Looking up, Lin Sanjiu realized that his words were a little odd, "What do you mean?"

When Hei Zeji came closer, Lin Sanjiu had a vague feeling of what she had felt in the past. She remembered how his overbearing aura made it a little hard to breathe and her muscles quivered all over. He looked at Soulsqn and narrowed his eyes. The latter immediately shivered.

"I heard that name from another posthuman. That person said he was from Progressor Alliance and told me to inform the Puppeteer to come here to catch her."

"He approached me because my name felt familiar—" Lin Sanjiu gulped.

Lin Sanjiu had a very good impression of Hei Zeji. Even though he seemed ill-tempered, he was very reliable when they were at Hyperthermal Hell. When she first saw him, she was delighted to see someone she knew but she overlooked something.

"Is Hei Zeji from Progressor Alliance?"

With this chilling doubt, Lin Sanjiu was just about to question him when the tall man in front of her spoke.

"What's Progressor Alliance? Who is Puppeteer? Who are they anyway?" he suddenly said.

"Huh?" Lin Sanjiu stared wide-eyed at Hei Zeji. Her amber irises shone under the sun. She didn't understand the context. If Hei Zeji did not belong to any faction, why was he here? "How did you enter?"

Hei Zeji took a big bite from his chocolate toffee ice cream as he listened to Lin Sanjiu stammering as she questioned him. After a faint hint of satisfaction he got from the ice cream disappeared quickly from his face, he slowly replied, "I've been in this world for two months. I happened to land right out this pocket dimension when I was transported to this world. Red Nautilus sounds familiar... Where is this place?"

And Lin Sanjiu thought she was unlucky before she heard about Hei Zeji's predicament!

Lin Sanjiu looked at him, gaping. For a moment, she didn't know how she should start to explain. After she explained the general situation in Red Nautilus, Hei Zeji nodded.

"Ah, so this is one of the Twelve Worlds. Sounds boring." Even though he was still holding his ice cream, there was still a scary vicious aura about him. "Nevermind. This pocket dimension is pretty good."

"You— you... you plan to stay here for 14 months?"

If it cost 10 Stamina points each day, how many points must one

get to stay here for 14 months?

Hei Zeji would not answer any question he had already explained. He turned to look at Soulsqn and asked, "What is this? Is it your pet?"

From a certain angle, Hei Zeji wasn't wrong. Lin Sanjiu raised Soulsqn up. She had not really tamed "it" so she didn't know how to answer.

"It's really ugly," Hei Zeji concluded.

Soulsqn immediately twisted her body. But when she saw the person who said that, she hung her head down and did not move again. After a while, she hissed, "I... I need to consume just one person..."

Lin Sanjiu was startled and did not know how Hei Zeji would react. He narrowed his eyes.

"Pass me your dog for a moment."

Lin Sanjiu trusted Hei Zeji because he saved her once. She hesitated and finally handed Soulsqn to him, but not before giving him a cautionary warning, "Be careful. It can create illusions—"

She wasn't sure if Soulsqn, who was now struggling desperately, had already started to fight back. But when Hei Zeji held her neck and brought her over to the ice cream truck, she seemed docile and obedient.

After a while, Lin Sanjiu heard the familiar squelching sound from the back of the ice cream truck.

A bloodied black bear vest lay on the grass, showing slightly from behind the ice cream truck.

When Soulsqn emerged with her small leather shoes, she already looked much better. Her face still looked terrible but when she moved it was visible that she had already recovered quite a lot. Her dried up limbs had already grown out once more.

"Is that the posthuman who informed you about me?" Lin Sanjiu asked Hei Zeji when Soulsqn rushed back eagerly to her side. "You killed him?"

Hei Zeji lifted one side of his mouth and showed a malicious smile.

"He was annoying."

"What did that person do..." Even though Lin Sanjiu did not like that man, she didn't feel that it was necessary to kill him. After thinking about it for a while, she decided to change the subject and asked Hei Zeji about Li Zhijun's current status. Unexpectedly, the two men were separated after a little incident at Hyperthermal Hell. After that, they did not meet each other again.

"It's alright. When you find a Consular Officer, you can always find him." After Lin Sanjiu said that, she looked at the digital clock nearby and was shocked, "I need to go! If I don't leave now, the door will be closing soon!"

It was 5 minutes to the door's closing time. If she wanted to leave, Lin Sanjiu had to go now. The ice cream truck was quite a distance from the large castle door!

"You're leaving the pocket dimension?" Hei Zeji raised his brow.

"No—" Even though it was quite embarrassing, Lin Sanjiu quickly told Hei Zeji about the situation at the Bumper Karts station. "Bumper Karts is a little difficult. Just to be on the safe side, I am going to prepare myself before coming in again. I will get 15 Stamina point..."

Hei Zeji listened to her expressionlessly and did not reply.

Seeing that he wasn't about to reply any time soon, Lin Sanjiu bid him farewell and ran toward the exit dragging Soulsqn behind her.

After she ran a few steps, she suddenly felt the hair on her back standing.

Even though she didn't hear anything, somehow she knew that something was heading directly at her at high speed, tearing through the air. Before Lin Sanjiu could scream, she tumbled forward to the ground as fear gripped her body. A sharp cold wind swept above her head and she saw a black crescent-like shadow.

When she turned around, the black crescent froze in mid-air. As Hei Zeji made a gesture, it remained floating in the air.

Chapter 335: Lin Sanjiu Constructed A Toilet

Lin Sanjiu felt that she was too naive to think that she had improved quite a lot.

The "crescent moon" was made of a dull, sheenless material. It moved soundlessly through the air like a specter in the cold night. Lin Sanjiu's eyes followed the crescent moon closely, yet her body felt slow and sluggish compared to the crescent moon.

When she first saw it, it was still a distance from her. However, when she blinked her eyes again, it was already by her side. She couldn't even catch how the crescent moon could move in a split second. To avoid getting hit, she thrust herself toward the ground once more.

Lin Sanjiu had tossed Soulsqn out of her way earlier. Lin Sanjiu crawled up from the ground and stared forward. Right now, she had not recovered her full strength. Even if she was at her top condition, she knew that she could not outrun the attacks from that black crescent moon. To avoid the attention of the two people fighting, Soulsqn moved backward, little by little.

Bam! With a loud sound, the ground shook as the crescent moon hit the ground. Lin Sanjiu felt her bones shaking from the impact. It hurt. She sucked in a mouthful of air with a hiss and before she could even observe her surroundings. She felt the hairs on her skin stand on end. She quickly rolled on the ground, barely avoiding the black crescent moon that dove down once again.

She didn't even have the chance to ask "why".

The black crescent moon moved in an arc shape in mid-air. Following the shape of its trajectory, crescent moons of different sizes appeared one after another solidifying and disappearing immediately. The first crescent slowly faded so that it was now translucent like a bubble. It became a shape of a gibbous moon and floated in the sky like a fallen star.

"Of the five phases of the moon, I only used one. I don't think it is too hard on you, right?" There was a cruel sense of humor in Hei Zeji's voice. The hardened tone of his voice seemed to be forged through bloodshed and destruction and seemed to be able to stir an intense fear at will. This was not the first time Lin Sanjiu had felt such an aura vicious enough to make anyone tense up...

Even so, as that gibbous moon started to move again and disappear from her sight, she found it hard to believe that Hei Zeji had intentions to kill her—

The next second, a force which burst forth from the gibbous moon hit her waist. Lin Sanjiu was flung far away. If a building was hit by that force, it would have been halved.

Lin Sanjiu was flung so high up that she was just a small figure in the air. This was quickly followed by a loud thud as she fell heavily to the ground. Dirt and grass flew everywhere as the ground shook a little. Even though she had managed to open up her wings in the air, a few pieces of bones from them broke off, flying through the air.

After some time had passed, a trembling figure finally struggled up amidst the dust.

The moment Lin Sanjiu realized that she could not dodge that attack, she immediately activated her [Defence Forcefield] and concentrated her higher consciousness around her waist. Her eyes were still blurry after that blast of light from her [Defence Forcefield].

Thankfully, her high-risk strategy to concentrate her protective barrier around her waist worked. After she sat up and vomited a few mouthfuls of blood, she finally felt her twisting organs settling down.

By then, Hei Zeji was already standing in front of her.

"You suck," he commented coldly with a hint of annoyance. "You

are a Growth-type with quite a high potential value, how did you develop to such a state today?"

Lin Sanjiu looked at him, confused. For a second, she didn't know what he meant.

Every word from Hei Zeji was like a sharp knife specifically directed at her as he continued condescendingly, "You are planning to leave the amusement park just because you can't get past the first station? You are still that weak sh*t just as before. If this were a pocket dimension that didn't allow you to exit, were you going to just start crying?"

He lifted a corner of his mouth without any hint of jest.

"Your combat techniques are all wrong."

From the current situation, it seemed as if really did not intend to kill her. However, with cold sweat pouring from her head, she felt even worse than the moment she was physically attacked.

"How many worlds have you been to? I've only been to—"

She felt those words on the tips of her tongue but somehow she didn't retort.

Even if she didn't want to admit it, Hei Zeji's word had caught her Achilles' heel.

If she was trapped in a situation where she couldn't back out, what would she do?

Lin Sanjiu bit her lower lip but she momentarily couldn't think of a solution.

"Stand up."

Hei Zeji lowered his eyes as he spat those two words coldly. After that, he turned and continued down Frog Route as if he couldn't be bothered with her anymore.

"Wait, wait... You mentioned that my techniques are all wrong?"

Lin Sanjiu hurt all over, it felt as though she had been run over by a train. Before she could react properly, she struggled to follow him, "What do you mean? I have defeated many people in the past!"

The person walking in front of her did not even bother to turn back to respond.

Lin Sanjiu wasn't willing to take it lying down. She was angry and confused, but she also felt a hint of craving that she didn't even notice herself. She hastened her pace and followed behind Hei Zeji like his tail.

When the two people walked back to the Bumper Karts, Soulsqn had already escaped long ago.

Hei Zeji shot a glance at Lin Sanjiu.

"Just let her go," Lin Sanjiu said. After thinking about it, she realized that she wasn't worried at all. "She can't complete this pocket dimension anyway, she would just be a burden. Besides, I know she won't go far. She would probably wait for me at the entrance door.

That was very possible. Unless Soulsqn personally saw Lin Sanjiu's corpse, she would not give up on her hope for reproduction.

The biggest problem she had now was that the castle doors were already shut and Lin Sanjiu only had 5 Stamina points.

If she wanted to play the Bumper Karts again, she would need to pay for the entrance fee of 5 points. In other words, if she wanted to keep all her limbs and get past 12 am without any body parts missing, she would have to win at least two rounds.

Once she thought about this, her brows furrowed and she sighed.

Her sigh faded into the silent surrounding. She was startled. When she looked up, Lin Sanjiu realized that Hei Zeji had walked far away from her without even giving her any notice. Anxious,

she quickly ran after him.

"Uh," she said as she tried to make conversation with this cold and fierce man. "Where are your two ice cream cones?"

"I finished them when I was hitting you," Hei Zeji replied without even looking.

"Both of those ice cream cones were at least 500g each," Lin Sanjiu was slightly stunned.

Then she laughed, "You like sweet food?"

"Yeah."

Hei Zeji wasn't the best person to have a conversation with. Lin Sanjiu had to stop with the small talk because she didn't know how to continue. In the end, she ran in front of him decisively and lowered her head with a sincere attitude.

"You... mentioned that I did everything wrong. Can you tell me what is right? What should I do?" Lin Sanjiu asked rather hastily, "If I had the right combat techniques, could I get through that station? Could you please tell me?"

Once she calmed down, Lin Sanjiu had an inkling of the situation. Hei Zeji probably didn't even treat her as a real opponent. He was probably just testing her casually. However, even with her full capabilities, Lin Sanjiu barely escaped getting badly hurt.

Hei Zeji looked at Lin Sanjiu expressionless. She did not know what he was thinking.

"Follow me," he finally said after Lin Sanjiu started trembling from the waiting. Then, he strode off to the Bumper Karts attraction.

She was so anxious that her heart raced even as she quickly followed him.

"You need to know two things," Hei Zeji said without turning to

look at Lin Sanjiu. While he spoke, he made a gesture and a couple of waxing crescent moons appeared in his hand in a disk-like arrangement. "Firstly, with your aptitude and Potential Growth Value, your combat capabilities should be at least three times better."

He kicked open the door to the arena impatiently. The old woman in the F1 uniform immediately looked up before standing up sluggishly. Lin Sanjiu had already been here once so she knew that the old woman was going to collect the entrance fee from them.

With a beep, Lin Sanjiu swiped her wrist past a sort of card-detector device, "If that's the case, why am I not three times stronger?"

"You used ten tonnes of steel to construct a toilet. You basically just wasted your talent," Hei Zeji sprang up and leaped into a white bumper kart. He moved so smoothly that it was almost incomprehensible how he could feel his pair of long legs. "Just choose any one of the karts. Remember this. Don't attack them with your weapons."

Lin Sanjiu looked once at the waxing crescent moons in his hand. Following which, she found the blue bumper kart she used previously. To her, she wanted to succeed where she failed.

"Why would you help me?"

"I am already helping you. So stop dawdling like a sissy."

"What is the second matter?"

Even though they were a few bumper karts away from each other, Lin Sanjiu could still hear his answer clearly. "In every station within Starry Carnival Amusement Park, the difficulty of the first round is adjusted to the player's capabilities. After each round, the difficulty would be increased by a few folds based on that baseline."

"What?" Lin Sanjiu thought that she might have misheard him, "You mean—"

"Yeah," Hei Zeji frowned with annoyance as he flashed a white canine tooth almost threateningly, "Starry Carnival Amusement Park is a pocket dimension that works specifically for Growth-type posthumans. Only Growth-types can keep up with its difficulty slope. If we want to bring you back on the right track, there isn't any better place."

Lin Sanjiu stared at him in a daze. The old woman pressed a bell and the bumper karts started moving. This was when something daunted on Lin Sanjiu.

"This is the reason why Santa Claus doesn't enter this place himself despite how powerful he is."

Chapter 336: The Game Fraught with Danger

Hei Zeji was a blunt person.

Regardless of the circumstances and possible consequences, Hei Zeji wouldn't say what he didn't want to say, what he didn't think was necessary, and what he merely found was too troublesome to explain. Lin Sanjiu didn't know what his reasons were this time, but she had already suffered a lot because of this particular bad habit of his.

Earlier when Hei Zeji had been explaining the basic rules of the game, he forgot to mention an essential detail.

If there were two people with a large combat power disparity present in the same game, the default difficulty of the game would be adjusted based on the person with higher combat capabilities. In other words, Starry Carnival Amusement Park only cared about extraordinary Growth-types with great potential and ability.

This could also mean another thing: the difficulty for this game was set based on Hei Zeji's combat capabilities; thus, it would only be a tad more challenging than usual for him.

The duration of the game, according to Hei Zeji's level, would be five minutes.

It was clear enough that the bumper kart game didn't care at all about Lin Sanjiu's survival.

"Hey, Hei Ze-- woahhhhhh—"

Lin Sanjiu's hailing for Hei Zeji changed into a cry of fear. She turned the steering wheel sharply to one side and, in a split second, narrowly avoided crashing into a pink bumper kart before her bumper kart tilted over. She had to use her arm to push her bumper kart back into balance.

As Lin Sanjiu slowly regained from the shock, the pink bumper kart swerved and vanished into the ether.

"Anything?"

Another white bumper kart zoomed out from the side and gave the already badly frightened Lin Sanjiu yet another shock. After she realized that it was Hei Zeji and was confident that they were safe for the moment, she quickly asked him, "What is happening? Why are there fewer karts now than the previous game?"

The game had merely been in play for a few seconds, yet Lin Sanjiu already began to feel powerless. If the previous match was described as a slightly dangerous bumper kart game, then this time it had turned into a complete killing machine.

Well, it wasn't entirely accurate to say that all of the bumper karts were gone. There were some bumper karts of various colors not far away. All of them continually patrolled around the only two players, Lin Sanjiu and Hei Zeji, while trying to ram into them at top-speed whenever possible. However, compared to the previous game, at least more than half of the bumper karts had disappeared which made the large, spacious arena look vacant.

Could it be that they can go into stealth-mode?

Before Lin Sanjiu got an answer from Hei Zeji, a massive force hit her and thrust her body forward. She glanced over her shoulder and saw that a green bumper kart had rammed into her.

"Damn it!"

While she cursed inwardly, the familiar female voice reverberated from her back, "Collision with a green bumper kart. For the next fifteen seconds, the player can only move in the 'forest.' Failing to do so will result in continuous collisions. "

"Even the rules have changed!"

Raising her head, Lin Sanjiu offered Hei Zeji a blank look. While she was waiting for him to say something, a pink bumper kart

appeared out of thin air. Luckily, the pink bumper kart came diagonally from behind her this time, and there was a considerably large gap between the pink bumper kart and her, so she could dodge the pink bumper kart by simply spinning the steering wheel.

"Don't turn!"

Following Hei Zeji's bellow, a crescent moon materialized right above Lin Sanjiu's hands and stroke downward. Shocked, Lin Sanjiu instinctively withdrew her hands from the steering wheel. Losing her hands was the very last thing that she welcomed.

"Reverse your kart!"

Lin Sanjiu's body reacted before her brain gave the command. After she pressed the accelerator to the floor and opened the throttle, a thought came to mind: wasn't there a green bumper kart behind her?

However, when the pink bumper kart screeched to a stop where she had been previously, Lin Sanjiu had backed her bumper kart into the space behind her without a problem. The green bumper kart was nowhere to be seen.

The pink bumper kart did not continue the assault, and Lin Sanjiu thanked God for that minor good fortune. The pink bumper kart moved around like a living organism looking for direction. It inched backward for a short distance and vanished into the air again.

Lin Sanjiu's expression grew grim as she asked Hei Zeji, "What is wrong with these karts?"

Hei Zeji glanced up, revealing his even grimmer expression and met Lin Sanjiu's questioning gaze.

"Why are you so dull? Could it be that you've met some mongrels by chance and gave them your reflexes to fill their stomachs?" Hei Zeji effortlessly evaded another bumper kart that came from nowhere. Then, he continued, "I wonder how you survive the

previous game. Let me guess, you took advantage of your strengthened body and braved through it?"

Lin Sanjiu, who was about to say something to defend herself, was silenced by Hei Zeji's critic.

"He's right," Lin Sanjiu thought to herself.

"Okay, listen to me carefully," Hei Zeji seemingly always breathed with the air of impatience when he was talking. He said, "Space here has been distorted and folded into multiple layers. Light cannot shine directly on them, so you can't see them—"

As if he was proving his words, he made a sharp u-turn before finishing his sentence. He followed the bumper kart that had ambushed him earlier on and vanished before reappearing moments later.

"Although they are invisible, there will always be a signal when they emerge from the folding space. Look for that signal," Lin Sanjiu felt that Hei Zeji's demonstration belied his explanation. He just vanished and popped out at another spot without showing any sign at all, "... Your reflexes are too slow. You should start practicing how to evade their ambush first."

"What does it look like in the folding space?" Lin Sanjiu thought for a moment and quickly followed up with another question, "Can you also explain to me what it means that I can only move in the 'forest'?"

"I don't know. I drove with my eyes closed, but it seems that there are many runways inside the folding space. Nevertheless, don't feel relieved once you successfully evade an ambush. These runways are designed in 360-degrees, so the bumper kart can bump into you from any angle—"

Hei Zeji paused and squinted before he continued, "Well, for the 'forest,' I'm guessing it probably refers to the route where those green bumper karts have traversed. That is to say that from this

moment onward there are two things you need to do: first, recall the routes those greenies have traveled, and second, try your best to keep your eye on them all the time. Once you drive on a track that has not been traveled by any green bumper karts, you'll be punished."

Apparently, Hei Zeji had exhausted his patience after giving Lin Sanjiu the lengthy explanation in one go. While Lin Sanjiu was digesting the hefty amount of information, he floored the accelerator and launched his white bumper kart forward.

Although both of them had exchanged a substantial amount of information, the game had only started thirty seconds prior. As the distance between Hei Zeji and Lin Sanjiu grew larger, four bumper karts cut into the gap between them and charged at Lin Sanjiu at full speed.

Lin Sanjiu drew a deep breath to steady herself and made her utmost effort to ignore the bumper karts that were closing in on her.

Although she wasn't a prodigy, she learned things rather fast. After she'd fully digested Hei Zeji's explanation, she found that the bumper karts that were always in her sights actually posed little threat to her.

"Green, green, where are you..."

From the beginning of the game until now, she didn't even have the time to catch her breath, let alone to pay attention to what was going on around her. As such, memorizing the routes that each type of bumper kart had taken was an impossible task.

Lin Sanjiu sighed and repented inwardly, "It would be great if I still had the enhanced perception that I obtained from School of Higher Consciousness. It would have spared me the aggravation of rummaging through my memories..."

Hei Zeji was right: she was too oblivious. She didn't know there

was a bumper kart in front of her until the collision happened and the impact sent her sliding away.

"Collision with a brown bumper kart. Buried the seed deep into the soil effect. Last until the end of the game."

As Lin Sanjiu was distracted, an invisible object pounced on her face, covering her mouth and nose. She felt like she was being buried alive. Her chest got heavier and breathing grew more difficult until she was not able to draw air into her lungs.

"What the hell are you doing?" Hei Zeji's voice was filled with anger as it traveled far from the opposite side of the arena, "Didn't I tell you to watch out for the signal before they appear?"

Lin Sanjiu's face quickly became red as her brain's oxygen supply was depleted. She could not even speak a word now, so how could she still have the energy to spare to observe the bumper karts?

Suddenly, she caught the sight of a bumper kart with the corner of her eyes. Lin Sanjiu was struggling for air, and it was several folds harder for her to make a move at her current state. Still, Lin Sanjiu promptly hit the accelerator and carefully drove toward the spot where she had collided with the green bumper kart.

Like sharks attracted to blood, ten bumper karts quickly gathered around Lin Sanjiu leaving her not more than three seconds to steer clear of their ambush. At the same time, Lin Sanjiu heard her blood boiling in her eardrums as fear began to swallow her.

"The reason Soulsqn became a raggedy doll was probably that she joined me in the previous game... Will I become like her as well?"

"There are only two seconds left before that kart crashes into me ____"

"So, where did those green bumper karts actually go?"

Not even Lin Sanjiu was aware that her consciousness had expanded as it flowed madly. There was only a second left before the collision. She could even see the words imprinted on the pink

bumper kart.

"There!"

Just as she thought she was doomed, a vividly clear scene jumped out in her mind. It was as if a dazzling ray of light pierced through the darkness; it granted her a glimpse of hope to shatter the tricky situation.

Her heart beat twice, and Lin Sanjiu knew that she did not have enough time to turn the steering wheel anymore. She spread her left bony wing in the spur of the moment and thrust it into the floor. Just before her blue bumper kart toppled over, she slammed on the accelerator. With the acceleration and the propulsive force provided by her left bony wing, she propelled herself forward leaving a streak of sparks behind.

When she was at the peak of her concentration, she calmed down. She didn't know whether it was real or was just an illusion. She felt that her body, reflexes, and her joints had become much smoother and quicker to react.

At this moment, the memory that she had been struggling to recall became clear, almost crisp to her foggy mind. She knew a green bumper kart had gone this way.

She waited anxiously for half a second. When the sound that symbolizes the "punishment" did not reach her ear, Lin Sanjiu knew.

She was on the right track.

Chapter 337: The Way to Become a Mongrel

"Please enjoy your meal."

After placing the salver down, the young and attentive male attendant bowed and retreated from the room.

An albescent teacup sat on top of the desk-sized salver. Wisps of hot steam rose into the air from the cup, carrying the earthy tea aroma and filling the room with fragrance. On one side of the salver sat a small cup of hot milk sweetened with just a spoonful of honey as requested.

Glaring at the damn little furball, AYU felt that she had agreed to help him too soon.

Placing his white paw through the round cup holder, the cat doctor picked up the cup of milk, poured it into the tea, and made himself a cup of brew. There was a selection of snacks placed next to the beverage: a plate of cookies, a plate of yolk pastries, and a plate of dried peeled shrimp. He moved his nose from one plate of snacks to the next and left a damp, cat nose-shaped mark on a piece of cookie.

In contrast to Meowie Hu's warm hospitality, AYU and her kinsmen were treated like a bunch of convicts. The female captain kept them under strict surveillance, day and night.

Even though they did not want to eat cookies or drink milk tea, the Souls were still quite uncomfortable. After all, they all were given seats on the floor while the cat doctor sat in an upholstered armchair.

"Does your ability affect all human beings?" asked AYU.

All in all, AYU believed that Meowie Hu already knew that Souls weren't human beings.

Meowie Hu lapped the milk tea, and his two big, round eyes blinked due to the steam.

"So far, no human being on this planet has been able to escape my ability but one," Meowie Hu paused for a moment, taking another lap of his milk tea before continuing, "And that one person is my friend."

The Souls looked at each other and marveled at the fact revealed by Meowie Hu. After much contemplation, AYU suddenly said, "Perhaps, we might need your help instead."

The cat doctor didn't say yes or no. He merely continued to lap his afternoon tea.

Unlike Santa Claus's crazy-like speed, the airship was flown at a slow and steady speed. After arriving at the maritime space of the suspected destination, the airship swanned over the ocean so that Silverdale could locate Soulsqn's coordinates. After about half a day, Silverdale finally captured Soulsqn's faint signal and pinpointed the exact location of the pocket dimension.

After that, the airship descended and hovered ten meters above the ocean.

As the female captain opened the cabin door, she anxiously said, "Please be careful, doctor. If no one is here to pick you up when you come out from the pocket dimension, please contact me with the communication device I gave you."

The cat doctor's eyes ran down the sea. He was very excited and curious about the adventure that lay ahead. Without turning his head, the cat doctor waved his paw and said, "Okay, okay. Thank you, you're the best. I have to go now."

Meowie Hu watched as the Souls jumped out of the airship one after another. He psyched himself up, crouched down, and use his hind legs to propel him into the air.

The cat doctor didn't have any skydiving experience, so he hadn't expected it to be so spine-chilling. As he was plummeting, he meowed all the way down without keeping his usual graceful

demeanor. Just before he touched the surface of the ocean, he disappeared.

When Meowie Hu landed on the rocky, reef and grass-covered shore, his tail was still in a bristled state. He was badly shaken.

The little furball studied his surrounding slack-jawed. His brain seemed to be unable to process the current situation. How did he arrive here when he had almost fallen into the ocean? Refusing to believe that he was safe, he lifted his paw and checked himself. After finding that his fur was completely dry, Meowie Hu heaved a sigh of relief. After that, he proceeded cautiously toward the gate that seemed as though it was built for a castle where a group of Souls stood at the entrance gathered around discussing something that was unknown to others.

Using his natural feline advantage of being able to walk silently, the cat doctor snuck behind the group of Souls. He found himself a good spot and eavesdropped on their discussion.

"The queen is here; I can sense her. Ah, she's moving toward us," Silverdale stood in the middle of the group, and he let out a guttural, inconceivable hissing before he said with joy, "We should stay here to greet the queen. She's near."

The cat doctor's ears flicked. He heard somebody heading their way from behind the entrance gate. That person's pace wasn't fast. It was just one step after another like his thumping heart. As a newbie to the world, he was attracted to everything not to mention meeting a queen of non-human races. His bright emerald eyes were filled with curiosity.

"Since she is their queen, I can assume that she's a beauty? Or at any rate, she should be —"

His wild mind froze the moment Soulsqn appeared in his sight.

"You guys are here."

Soulsqn seemed unsurprised to meet her clansmen here. She had

already sensed their presence even before they entered the pocket dimension. As she walked, she tried to push her skin that slid down like mud. She found the task exhausting. As a Soul, it was such a rare feeling.

"My queen—" AYU took a step forward, paused for a second when she saw Soulsqn's gruesome state and continued, "—You are injured. Will you revert to your primitive state?"

Soulsqn had never been damaged to such state since she was born. Her body was half drained, so she did not even have an idea of what to do next. After she contemplated for a moment, the queen waved her hand. Her floppy human skin suit with nails flung uncontrollably in the air as she gave her order to her clansmen.

As the queen of the Souls, she did not have to speak to give a command. The Souls followed her orders, unquestionably and dedicatedly. As they moved aside obediently and silently, the little furball who was hiding behind them was revealed.

"My queen, allow me to introduce Doctor Hu. Doctor Hu is the one who founds us an airship," AYU quickly stepped forward and explained to Soulsqn, "It has an absorbing ability which may be of use to us."

Following that, AYU systematically explained in full detail how the cat doctor's ability affected humans. When she reached the cookies the cat doctor had on the airship, Soulsqn's eyes glowed.

Meowie Hu was feeling a little bit disturbed by being stared at by a half-humanoid creature. He lashed his big fluffy tail nervously and kept his back as straight as possible to maintain his graceful appearance.

"Doctor Hu," said Soulsqn reverently. If Lin Sanjiu was around, she would have been astonished by Soulsqn's polite tone, "I greatly appreciate the assistance you have offered to my men so far. If there is anything I can do to make myself useful, please do not

hesitate to let me know. I will gladly offer you a hand, but now, there is still have one more problem that I hope you can help me."

"Say it."

"Well, I believe nobody in this world besides you can put an end to my problem," Soulsqn praised Meowie Hu to bribe him into doing her bidding. She learned the way from humans, and she found it very effective. She then continued, "There is still another person inside the amusement park."

Nobody was able to escape from being flattered, not even a cat. Meowie Hu was exhilarated. As he immersed in the pleasure, he nodded at Soulsqn to continue speaking.

"She is, how should I put this—" Soulsqn paused as she struggled to ferret through her brain for the term to describe the relationship between her and Lin Sanjiu. Their relationship was kind of odd: they were not enemies, nor they were partners, "—is very useful to me, and I need her. However, my order won't work on her, neither can I apprehend her with force. So—"

"Understood," the cat doctor nodded as he said, "I'll go and meet her."

Hearing this, Soulsqn drew and let out a long breath of relief. She had gotten the guarantee from her men and her men would never lie to her, so the feline standing in front of her had to be pretty capable.

"At last, after so much time, after experiencing so much humiliation and torture, I finally could set everything back to their rightful track again."

She was happy with the result of their negotiation. Hence, she readily agreed to offer help to the cat doctor, "That's great, doctor. If your friend does require our help, tell us. I'll send my men there right away."

"Meow."

Both the cat doctor and Souls were happy with the outcome of their negotiation. As they finalized their deal, the Souls that had been sent out by Soulsqn returned. Sajee and Silverdale walked in front of the group. They greeted the queen and reported their findings, "We didn't find anyone with the look of Santa Claus nearby, nor did we see any living humans."

Soulsqn's squished jelly-like skin jiggled. No one aside from her kind understood the meaning behind her gesture. Then, a Soul stepped forward and responded to her question, "The ground that we're standing right now isn't vast. It takes less than ten minutes to finish a circle. From the two edges, we could faintly see the remaining two parts of the amusement park. It seems like two entrances. However, there is a large ocean between them. It's impossible to go around it."

The amusement park was designed like a cross such that each end of the cross was further separated into another four routes. Soulsqn, who originally wanted to find a shortcut, fell silent. She felt the task at hand was getting more difficult.

"Why don't we just go in from this entrance?" Meowie Hu craned his neck and looked over to the direction of the entrance.

If she could sigh, Soulsqn would have done it. While she reveled in the newfangled, never-experienced human feeling, she spoke slowly, "The reason we can't enter from this entrance is that the attractions inside are extremely tough. I only took part in the first round, yet I ended up in this devastated state. However, that's not the end of it. If you continue the game for the second round, the difficulty will be triple of the previous round. Also, if you refuse to participate in any of the attractions, you won't be able to proceed."

"Hmm? Oh, I guess your ability won't earn you any shortcut as well. The workers in the amusement park are not humans."

After listening to Soulsqn's explanation, the cat doctor frowned. A solemn expression graced his face as he fell into deep thought.

"I think we can find a loophole here," his big emerald eyes rolled as he continued to speak his mind, "Let's imagine this: if a player brought a mindless dog into a pocket dimension, would that make the dog a player? Also, similarly, your shoes wouldn't be a player, right?"

Even though Soulsqn felt that the logic was odd, she couldn't help but feel that what the cat doctor said made sense.

"But... we're living organisms with consciousness and self-awareness. The park will regard us as players once we step into the park," Soulsqn countered the cat doctor's logic with her own experiences.

"Regarding that issue," Meowie Hu slightly tilted his head and said confidently, "I might have an idea about how to solve it."

Chapter 338: Getting A Master

"How should I describe this feeling?"

Lin Sanjiu had already been oxygen-deprived for three minutes. Her cheeks were turning very red and the veins on her forehead were starting to pop. Just as she hit her steering wheel and changed the direction of her kart, this rather irrelevant thought surfaced in her mind.

If she really had to describe her current feeling, she felt like she was a paraplegic who had been cured after many years. Or, perhaps, a very dusty porcelain vase which had been wiped clean.

—

"There are too many different abilities in the apocalyptic world. If you're over-reliant on your evolved abilities and Special Items, what will you do if you meet an enemy that is your natural bane... Do you know how many powerful posthumans I have killed?" Hei Zeji's voice seemed to be just beside Lin Sanjiu's ears. She could even hear the sort of cold laughter between his sentences. "Your own body is the true source of your strength."

A person's body could be used in two ways.

As a Growth-Type, Lin Sanjiu could sense the gradual improvements in her physical attributes over the years. With every passing day, her endurance grew steadily. Her physical strength was also growing every day. Her memory was also improving. Though the daily improvements were so minute that it was hard to notice, the cumulative improvements over the months and years meant that Lin Sanjiu's body constitution had already far surpassed posthumans who evolved around the same time as she did. Due to her potential growth value, she was probably more powerful than other Growth-type posthumans. This created the foundation of combat capabilities.

"Your natural body constitution is not bad," Hei Zeji gave Lin

Sanjiu a rare compliment even though he looked as if it was hard for him to say that, "That was why I said you had ten tons of steel. But, you're totally tactless at handling what you have... As you had utilized what you have in a stupid manner, it negatively affected the natural growth of your body constitution. Otherwise, you would definitely be much stronger now."

Following what Hei Zeji taught her, Lin Sanjiu deactivated her [Higher consciousness scan], closed her eyes, and calmed herself.

Lin Sanjiu felt very uncomfortable for the first few seconds. Voluntarily closing her eyes while she was feeling suffocated and with the noise from multiple karts whizzing past, she felt more and more anxious. She did not feel the so-called "connection" with her body but instead found it torturous. She really wanted to open her eyes.

If it weren't for the crescent moon floating in front of her and its sharp edges targeting her eyes, Lin Sanjiu might have really opened her eyes. However, she knew that if her eyelids even moved, the crescent moon would definitely pierce her mercilessly and Hei Zeji would just leave nonchalantly.

Since she knew that her 'coach' wouldn't suddenly become softhearted, Lin Sanjiu could only try to listen to the movements around her as her body was covered with cold sweat.

When she first closed her eyes, she immediately noticed the swooshing sounds as the karts scrapped across the floor. Even if she couldn't see what was happening, she knew that the other bumper karts were surrounding her from all directions. But, there were too many bumper karts moving at the same time, so the noise they made was just a mixed mess, Lin Sanjiu couldn't tell which kart was coming toward her.

Just as a thought came to her, a bumper kart collided with her kart.

If the "punishment" from the female announcer wasn't enough,

Lin Sanjiu was knocked from behind as her reaction time dropped without her sight. In the blink of an eye, she heard the thud and her bumper kart shifted forward.

She simply couldn't judge where the karts were coming from with only her ears!

After enduring two punishments which lasted for a total of ten seconds, Lin Sanjiu's face was so red that it was as if she was about to just explode. Without oxygen and without her sight, she took on the punishments straight on. She felt that she was really at the end of her stick. If she received another punishment, she did not know if she could survive this round.

Under such circumstances, Lin Sanjiu tried her best to continue driving while she attempted to shut her "hearing". In other words, she was controlling her focus and consciousness such that her brain stopped processing the sounds she received from her ears. This was equivalent to her voluntarily making herself deaf.

"Sight, hearing, smell... Oh, it is unnecessary. Anyway, you need to shut down all of your five senses slowly until you only have your sense of touch." Hei Zeji's words echoed in Lin Sanjiu's mind once again. "Without these disturbances, you should try to fully appreciate what you can sense with your body."

After she had isolated her sense of touch and lost her other sense, Lin Sanjiu felt that her kart had been hit a couple of times in the darkness.

Without her hearing, she did not know what punishment she got. The moment an intense pain spread through her body, Lin Sanjiu felt that she might just sink into the pain that she was feeling. Despite the scalding pain that made her whole body tremble and the feeling that her organs were about to burst, she felt a little different. Something had changed.

Amidst the pain, she felt a layer of something. It was cold and resolute...

She felt her skin. She felt her muscles. She felt her pores. She felt every cell that formed her body. They were like immovable boulders in the wind. She could clearly feel every sensation they were transmitting to her.

Normally, no matter how she moved, she never had a "consciousness" of her limbs. Her limbs moved only when her brain commanded them to move. They were like strings on a puppet. However, Lin Sanjiu could feel her entire body now. They were so very tangible to her. It was as if her mind had melted and she could consciously control every inch of her being, and her whole body was only fully connected with her mind.

Lin Sanjiu did not even notice that her painful screams were gradually fading as she slowly felt the sensations in her body.

After half a second, Lin Sanjiu finally understood what Hei Zeji meant about the "warning signs".

When the folding space opened up once again and as the karts exited from the space, Lin Sanjiu realized that there were so many warning signs and clues. She could feel that the surrounding air currents suddenly changing directions. They "gushed" into the folding space as it opened. She could also feel the slight vibration as the bumper karts touched the ground with their weight.

Lin Sanjiu could feel the rhythmic vibrations coming from the bumper karts engines, no matter how faint they were, they were like dissonances chords in a music piece, she quickly picked them up with the feeling from her legs.

At the same time, the floor space diagonal from her was vibrating quicker. Lin Sanjiu could feel the breeze coming from that direction as it brushed against her left shoulder.

Lin Sanjiu couldn't see and couldn't hear. She couldn't even breathe. However, she turned her steering wheel deftly and slipped between two bumper karts that were surrounding her. The two karts hit each other with a thud the next second. As they couldn't

move away in time, they collided.

"How should I describe this feeling?"

It was as if dirt which had clogged all her pores had been washed out. Her sense of touch had never been so sharp.

"This is strange. How could I stand feelings so muddled before? How could I fight with that sort of body—"

Lin Sanjiu couldn't really remember where the forest was. As these thoughts surfaced in her mind, she twisted her steering wheel. Her bumper kart suddenly spun a semi-circle and she dodged another few bumper karts skillfully.

Several bumper karts of different colors collided with each other head-on just inches behind Lin Sanjiu. For a moment, they couldn't move as their engines buzzed on the spot.

Despite her sweat and bleeding wounds, a slight smile appeared at the corner of Lin Sanjiu's lips. As if to affirm the changes she felt, Lin Sanjiu knew that Hei Zeji had already withdrawn his crescent moon some time back. When the sharp edges from that crescent moon were in front of her eyes, her pores were about to explode as she felt the chill on her skin. The moment she evaded that first kart, that feeling was already gone.

Once the vibration from her vehicle suddenly stopped, the noise in the arena suddenly disappeared. It was silent once more.

Lin Sanjiu slowly opened her eyes. She regained her sight and then her hearing. Her five senses slowly returned to her as she woke up from the darkness. Everything suddenly looked more vibrant, yet when she remembered the darkness before, she felt a sense of familiarity.

"You didn't take too long to grasp that concept," Hei Zeji commented. He was standing at the entrance. He was leaning against a pole with his arms behind him and his body outstretched. He was like a black panther that was resting after a hunt. His

crescent moon was now a full moon. It was taller than a human and was floating quietly behind him. In contrast to Lin Sanjiu's wounded body, he looked way too clean.

"It's all thanks to you," Lin Sanjiu said frankly as she smiled at him without hiding her gratitude. She held the side of her chest with her shattered ribs and struggled to climb out of her kart. Hei Zeji raised a brow but did not appear to be willing to offer her any help.

"Congratulations. You received 11 Stamina points," the old woman in the F1 uniform opened her eyes. As Lin Sanjiu took a deep breath and walked over to her, the woman continued, "You get 5 points for completing the round and 6 points as an added bonus."

"Added bonus?" Lin Sanjiu was surprised. She wiped the blood and sweat on her face, "What's that about?"

"You created a trap and caused the enemy bumper karts to collide. They couldn't move for up to 4 seconds," the old woman said drearily, dragging her voice. "On the other hand, if the karts in your team collided with each other, stamina points would be deducted."

In any case, this was a rather unexpected piece of good news. At least, she had enough stamina points to survive today so she didn't need need to go through another round with her wounded body.

After checking with the old woman and finding out that she did not have to pay the entrance fee if she did not go out of the arena, Lin Sanjiu immediately found a corner to rest. She carefully moved her slightly damaged wings so that she could sit comfortably on the floor. Then, she let out a long sigh.

She could finally rest. She knew she could always take on the second round tomorrow. Hei Zeji's shadow loomed over her before he moved away and sat down at a spot not far from her.

"That's for you," he suddenly threw a small item over. "Eat it. Otherwise, you might die tomorrow."

Lin Sanjiu caught it immediately but she did not eat it. She looked at the small jellybean and suddenly smiled. "Hey, why is it so hard for you to just communicate properly?"

Chapter 339: Onward!

The lights in the Bumper Karts arena were on 24/7. They were never dimmed throughout the entire day. The light was so bright that Lin Sanjiu could see white even when she closed her eyes. Obviously, it wasn't comfortable sleeping in these conditions. Despite that, Lin Sanjiu quickly slipped into her dreams, taking in every bit of rest she could, like a sponge in water, trying to recover her strength and energy.

Hei Zeji turned his body and sat up from a flight of stairs. He threw a glance at Lin Sanjiu. Seeing that she was fast asleep, he stood up soundlessly and walked toward her.

Lin Sanjiu frowned as she continued sleeping.

He curled his left hand into a fist and suddenly hurled it rapidly. Based on the speed of his attack, if that fist landed properly, Lin Sanjiu might even vomit out her organs. The sleeping woman's breathing suddenly quickened. Before that punch reached her, Lin Sanjiu turned over and her breathing slowed down again.

Hei Zeji narrowed his eyes.

The moment he raised his hand, something in the surroundings changed. The sudden change was hard to describe. Even though they had fought previously, if Lin Sanjiu was awake, she would have realized that she had not seen such movements before. Hei Zeji placed his hands in the air. Next, as if he was following a rhythm, he slowly drew a few small but strange arcs in the air as his fingers shot toward Lin Sanjiu's neck.

Even though it seemed strange, that was exactly what happened.

The woman who was fast asleep lay in ignorance. When his fingers were just about to reach Lin Sanjiu's carotid artery, she opened her eyes immediately. Her wings rose slightly. Hei Zeji's hand was just a few millimeters away from Lin Sanjiu's skin. He

frowned at her.

Lin Sanjiu, who had just been abruptly woken up from her sleep, was still feeling a little groggy. From his expression, she couldn't tell if he was praising her or if he was unsatisfied.

"If I didn't stop, you'd be dead now." Hei Zeji lifted the corner of his lips, flashing his white canine. "How did you noticed? Why did it take you so long?"

Lin Sanjiu didn't want to talk to Hei Zeji lying down. She pushed herself up and felt a stinging pain from her chest. The corner of her eyes twitched a little. She looked up before answering him with some confusion, "It was what you taught me yesterday, right?"

"Explain yourself."

It happened in just a few seconds so Lin Sanjiu found it a little hard to describe. She crooked her head and tried to remember what she felt while she was dreaming. When the first punch approached her, she had already noticed.

Without the usual thoughts she had during the day, Lin Sanjiu entered a sort of basic meditative state while she was asleep. It was just like the "somatosensory training" she had yesterday, she could activate control over each part of her body down to her pores. She no longer felt the segregation between mind and body. Her control was absolute. It was clear and nimble.

Under such a state, the movement of air current caused by Hei Zeji's fist as it broke through the air was like a loud drum. Naturally, she had noticed it very quickly.

"Your reaction... was to just turn to one side?" Hei Zeji raised one of his brows slightly.

Lin Sanjiu exercised her mouth and replied, "Well... Yeah, I knew you were the one throwing that fist at me. It wasn't just anyone I didn't know. Oh, but I nearly didn't sense you the second time?"

Why? If I didn't feel the slight warmth when you were about to touch me, I might have just continued sleeping."

The reply she got from Hei Zeji was a slight nod. The man who resembled a black pather gave her a very reserved acknowledgment. "I think you are more familiar with that state now."

"What do you mean?"

"You can only feel movement. That is just the basics."

As Hei Zeji said that, he gestured for Lin Sanjiu to follow him. The two of them walked toward the rink of the bumper kart arena once more.

"As you get a better understanding, you would be able to detect more and more. A person's breathing, the speed of flowing blood, the trajectory of an attack... It would all become clear to you as if you could see them with your own eyes. Once you reach the purest state, even if you lose all your five senses, you can sense the subtle changes in your surroundings even when someone stands motionless near you. When a mass exists in space, you would sense the feeling that space has been 'occupied'. The change in the surrounding is caused by the gravitational field that comes with anything that has mass. Just like a planet's gravitational force in outer space."

Lin Sanjiu was tongue-tied as she heard what Hei Zeji said. Compared to the gazillion ton that a planet weighed, a human's weight was almost negligible. If a person could feel even the almost non-existent gravitational pull that another human possesses, how powerful could that be?

Even if Hei Zeji was already very powerful, it was apparent that he had not reached that stage.

"I told you yesterday that a person's body can be used in two ways. Sensing with your entire body is just a foundational step, the

other way is how you should fight under an hypersensory state."

Lin Sanjiu froze for a second after she leaped into one of the bumper karts, "Aren't you joining?"

"No matter how difficult this game gets, it will not help you learn how to battle using that state," Hei Zeji replied impatiently, he was a little fierce. "Just complete the next two round quickly with your level of difficulty."

Without Hei Zeji, the difficulty of the game was evidently much lower than what Lin Sanjiu expected, even though it was the second round. If the difficulty of the game with Hei Zeji was 30, the second round, after the difficulty increases by three times, would be 90. Lin Sanjiu was only half as good as Hei Zeji, so her second round was a difficulty of 45. Even though it wasn't easy, Lin Sanjiu managed to successfully complete the next two rounds.

Just as Starry Carnival Amusement Park had been designed, she improved as the game got harder. After Lin Sanjiu found out about the bonuses, she logically made good use of it. When she walked out from the Bumper Karts arena, she already had 27 Stamina points.

The old woman in the F1 uniform looked as apathetic toward life as before. She opened the walls of the back half of the arena. As the walls shifted with a loud rumble, sunlight poured from the skies. The next section of the Frog Route was revealed.

"You have completed the first station, would you like to change your route?" she asked dryly.

"Change my route?" Lin Sanjiu asked, puzzled. "I thought that in this amusement park you could only move on the route that you have chosen from the start?"

"Unless you complete a station. Once you complete a station, you can choose any route you would like to continue on. When you complete the next station, you can change your route again."

When Lin Sanjiu recalled the layout of the amusement park from the map, she felt that it was totally unnecessary to take a different route. Since Hei Zeji did not seem to object, she nodded to the old woman, "I will just continue with the Frog Route. I don't want to change."

After they left the Bumper Karts arena, Lin Sanjiu took out two paper cranes reluctantly as she was still affected by Santa Claus' ability. After she recorded her next destination, she released the paper cranes. The cranes fluttered away.

She originally suspected that Santa Claus had planted some sort of remote control explosive device in her body. However, after she felt her body in her hypersensory state a few times, Lin Sanjiu did not find anything. Clearly, the effect of Santa Claus's ability was formless.

Hei Zeji was uninterested in these things that did not concern him so it was no surprise that he didn't ask Lin Sanjiu anything. In fact, when Lin Sanjiu released the paper cranes and turned around, she realized that Hei Zeji had fallen asleep on a pole. The sound of the paper cranes' wings finally woke him up. He rubbed his eyes. After that, he followed behind Lin Sanjiu without saying a word and walked out of the arena.

The second section of the Frog Route seemed almost the same as the first section. The only difference was that the music from the speakers had been changed into a smooth piano piece. There was still a strong sweet scent in the air. All sorts of cute, colorful shops lined both sides of the road. It was quite understandable. Before the first station, who would have extra Stamina Points to spend on items?

When Lin Sanjiu took a closer look, she discovered that the shops were selling all sorts of items. There were balloons, drawing, souvenirs. They were things which seemed useless. There were also shops selling hotdogs, chili noodles, freshly squeezed juice, clothes, sleeping bags and things that were more useful.

After walking for some time, Lin Sanjiu even found a building with a door that had a cartoon. There was a "B&B HOTEL" sign on the door and it was 20 Stamina Points per night.

"If you walk further on Swan Route, and go to the next station, you can even buy guns and bullets," Hei Zeji suddenly said after they walked past a mushroom-shaped store. Suddenly, he added, "I wonder if there are any stores selling Special Items."

Apparently, Hei Zeji had explored quite a bit of the amusement park. Lin Sanjiu remembered the man in the bear's vest. The name of that Growth-type posthuman seemed to be Yidong. Lin Sanjiu didn't know how he had offended Hei Zeji such that he had to eventually lose his life.

After the two of them walked side by side for a while, they saw the next station up ahead.

Unlike the plain-looking Bumper Karts arena, the exterior of this particular attraction was exceptionally beautiful and elegant. Even though the sun was shining brightly, high above the sky, the brightly colored fluorescent lights that decorated the attraction were so eye-catching that they could be seen from afar. The rainbow-colored lights were extremely striking. The building looked as if it was built of various prism-like blocks and that created a dreamy, princess-like scene.

"What is this?" Hei Zeji's expression turned glum. "I don't want to enter."

Lin Sanjiu had more or less accustomed herself to his wilful personality. She had even developed a way to deal with him. After she persuaded Hei Zeji for quite a while, she managed to coax him to the entrance of the new arena. When they looked up, they could see the words, "Time Travel".

"After selecting the story you want, you can personally experience the past... The interactions that the players will have within this attraction are extremely interesting. This attraction is

not suitable for people with heart problems and high blood pressure..."

After Lin Sanjiu read the notice at that entrance, she turned to look at Hei Zeji, "Can this help with my combat training?"

"Let's go," the latter replied impatiently as he gestured to go and walked through the door first.

Chapter 340: Separated in Story of Château de Fontainebleau

Once Lin Sanjiu walked through the main door, she found herself in a short corridor that was so dark that she couldn't even see her fingers. The only light came from the eerie green glow of the exit sign.

After taking two blind steps forward, a shadow appeared from a dark corner of the corridor. The asymmetrically lit shadow transformed into a human figure. A woman with a wide smile suddenly revealed herself and spoke gently to the two people with her raspy voice, "The entrance fee is 6 Stamina points, thank you."

Beep. Lin Sanjiu waved her wrist in front of a device similar to the one she had seen at the Bumper Karts station. The woman with the raspy voice smiled, and the corner of the corridor gradually brightened. The outline of two slightly strange-looking movable metal platforms appeared.

That platform was basically a metal board made of wood sandwiched between two metal sheets. It was 3 feet wide and 5 feet long. The wheels of the platform fitted perfectly to the rails on the ground and, clearly, they were meant for the two people.

"The difficulty will be set based on this gentleman," the fair woman said gently. "When we start, the platform will move normally along the tracks. However, please note that if the player's feet leave the platform for more than one minute, it will be treated as a forfeit. Players who forfeit will have to join one of Starry Carnival Amusement Park station and will never be able to leave the amusement park."

Lin Sanjiu was startled. She turned to look at Hei Zeji.

"I don't know. Don't look at me," the latter lowered his eyes and stepped on one of the platforms, looking rather unhappy. After

being silent for a moment, he couldn't resist commenting, "Maybe, the player will become a [Jibakurei](#)".

"Your time travel experience will last for thirty minutes. Please enjoy." The woman smiled as she watched the two players.

After the players stood on their own respective platforms, the track buzzed, the ride started, and the platforms started to move slowly.

Unexpectedly, the platforms moved at a moderate speed. Lin Sanjiu looked up wanting to say something but the platform had already brought them to a turn.

When a strong snowy gale hit Lin Sanjiu, it interrupted all her thoughts. Despite all the training she had merging her consciousness and her body, Lin Sanjiu did not even have the slightest inkling that there would be a blizzard just around the corner!

The howling blizzard winds hit her face. For a moment, she couldn't hear a thing and she couldn't open her eyes. As she was wearing a tank top, goosebumps immediately appeared on her exposed skin. When the flakes of snow hit her body, they immediately melted to form cold wet patches on her clothes and skin. Lin Sanjiu shivered as she felt a layer of ice slowly forming on the platform she was standing on.

It wasn't easy keeping her balance on a platform that was becoming slippery due to the layer of ice on the platform. To maintain her balance, she crouched down and held the edge of the platform. That had the added benefit of keeping her warm.

"It was a cold winter day," a voice suddenly rang out without warning, as the blizzard raged, the voice continued as if narrating a story, "it was on this cold, windy day that our story unfolded."

"Get on with it!"

Hei Zeji's irritated voice rang out not far from Lin Sanjiu.

"Alright, can all players please choose a character from the name list present," the voice announced unaffected by Hei Zeji's comment, "After you complete your selection, you will not be able to change your character until the end of the round. Please survive till the end of the round in character."

"Male roles: Francis, Duke of Vendome, Nameless husband."

"Female roles: Gabrielle, Queen Margaret, Vera."

"Who... who are these people?" Lin Sanjiu was stunned. She waited for two seconds but the narrator did not introduce the characters. Noticing that it wasn't going to do so, she hesitatingly picked a name that made the strongest impression, "I choose Gabrielle."

Her voice was instantly swallowed by the howling blizzard.

She did not know which character Hei Zeji chose as her platform swung around violently after she said that name. The movement was very sudden. Luckily, Lin Sanjiu's body was no longer as before, otherwise, she would have been flung out of the platform. After she steadied herself, the metal board shot forward like an arrow. In the blink of an eye, Hei Zeji's shadow disappeared from behind her without a trace.

Lin Sanjiu was flabbergasted.

They entered the arena with the main intention that Hei Zeji could correct her combat techniques. Now that her "coach" was missing, how was she going to learn from him?

She could not leave as she did not have 60 Stamina points. Lin Sanjiu gritted her teeth and calmed herself. She looked forward far into the cold, wintery night.

"Whatever happens, I need to just endure this first round."

As Lin Sanjiu shivered crazily, she sighed inwardly. Even though she had already gone through quite a few pocket dimensions, she could not understand the current circumstances. She knew she had

entered a building. Yet, her current surroundings were just so realistic. It felt as if she was really outdoors. The air current, the sound of the wind, and the scent of the woods were all very real to her.

After the metal board sped along the tracks for some time, the blizzard finally abated.

Lin Sanjiu's skin was already numb from the cold. Even as she entered her hypersensory state, Lin Sanjiu only felt numbness and nothing else. The tracks were covered with a layer of snow. As Lin Sanjiu looked out into the night, she saw only a blanket of bluish white snow. Stars slowly appeared in the night sky and a lit chateau appeared at the end of the snowfield.

The metal board moved directly toward the chateau.

As the platform got closer, the gothic style arched door of the chateau gradually became clearer. That architecture style was once vogue in medieval France. The door was shut but the platform did not seem to show any sign of slowing down. Maintaining its speed, it headed toward the large door. Just when Lin Sanjiu raised her arms thinking that she would hit the door, the door swung open in an instant.

Light from the flames of a fireplace flooded out and Lin Sanjiu squinted her eyes.

Even though the main hall was segregated by the many tracks on the floor, Lin Sanjiu could tell that the owners of the chateau were wealthy and influential people. The fireplace was decorated with carvings of flowers. There was a strong fire which kept the place warm. The floor was covered by a thick red carpet. There was a table in the hall and there was a set of sparkling ceramic tableware was overturned. A maid, sitting at the corner of the room, was sewing something. She looked up at Lin Sanjiu and stood up before greeting her, "Madam, you back."

From the looks of it, the owner of the chateau was Gabrielle, the

character she was playing.

While platform slowly decelerated, Lin Sanjiu was a little confused as to what she should do.

"Oh, you are busy?" she said as she raised her hand. Feeling awkward, she realized that the words she said did not seem to fit the image of a "madam".

As expected, the maid looked at her with a perplexed face before she continued with her sewing. The piece of cloth she was holding seemed small and it was taking on the shape of a sleeve.

"Sister!"

A lively female voice called out from behind her all of a sudden. Just like the blizzard, it simply appeared without any warning. Lin Sanjiu did not even notice when the young fair lady with black hair suddenly appeared at the stairs.

"There is a terrible blizzard out there. You shouldn't have gone out," the young lady reproached. "You need to take care of yourself now."

Lin Sanjiu stood in a daze when she heard the narrator speaking again, "Hearing the words of concern from her sister Vera, Gabrielle thanked the girl gratefully."

Thankfully, she didn't have to act out or say any dialogue. Lin Sanjiu let out a sigh of relief. Vera seemed to be one of the characters she did not choose.

"Go call some people to bring the bathtub in," Vera ordered the maid sitting in a corner. "It's warm here so I want to take a bath with my sister."

The maid immediately stood up and got a few people to carry a four-legged bathtub into the hall. They placed it in front of the fireplace and filled it with hot water. Vera took off her clothes quickly and jumped in. With her head above the water, she smiled at Lin Sanjiu, "Sister, join me."

As a player, Lin Sanjiu naturally didn't have to enter the bathtub. Lin Sanjiu swept the ice off the platform and sat down. The narrator went on, "Gabriel stepped in the bathtub. She had always taken her baths with her sister and had kept that practice even till today."

There was a bathtub in the middle of the main hall. A fair young lady with black hair sat in the bathtub, immersed. The maid behind her was looking down at her sewing...

Lin Sanjiu frowned. She had a vague feeling that she had seen this scene before yet she couldn't remember where.

"As she bathed, Gabriel took off her expensive and intricately-designed ring and started toying with it." The narrator's voice spoke with the same constant speed.

"Soon," Vera said in a consoling manner as if she had seen a glimpse of that ring, "Once the news of your pregnancy had been confirmed, I am sure the king will..."

"What's the point? Gabriel sighed. Margaret is still around," the narrator continued, "Margaret was the queen. Getting rid of her wasn't going to be easy."

"From the narration, the story seems to be about some royal harem drama... This Gabriel must be the king's lover and she is plotting to get rid of Margaret so that she can become the new queen." Lin Sanjiu felt that the names sounded very familiar. However, as these were all foreign names, she wasn't surprised if she had remembered them wrong...

"Next, Vera told Gabriel about the story between herself and a man called Francis."

Lin Sanjiu didn't know if it was because of the steam or young lady's embarrassment, but Vera's skin started turning red. There was a sweet expression on her face as she said to Lin Sanjiu, "Oh, I really like him very much. When I have the chance to see the king,

I will bring Francis along with me."

Lin Sanjiu listened expressionlessly. She found these sort of young lady's love story extremely boring. The thing which concerned her the most right now was what this 'Time Travel' station expected from her.

Unlike the perilous Bumper Karts, Lin Sanjiu had to just wait with boredom until bedtime.

The "bedtime" was just a symbolic thing. Lin Sanjiu could not get down from the platform. After she was brought into a bedroom, Lin Sanjiu found herself sitting in the darkness all alone. She waited, somewhat cluelessly, for the next part of the story.

Without Hei Zeji by her side, what sort of combat technique could she learn?

an earthbound spirit/ghost that is stuck in one place because of their grudge or hatred

Chapter 341: A Drawing in a Drawing

The darkness only lasted for a short time to symbolize the night. Sunlight filtered through the windows to show that it was another new day. The narrator was the first person to wake the people in the chateau. The maid hurried in and out of the room as she helped "Gabrielle" with her morning routine.

"After Gabrielle dolled herself up properly, she sat on a carriage and headed to the palace to visit Henry IV. Recently, Henry IV had been increasingly attracted to her talents and wit..."

When Lin Sanjiu heard the name "Henry IV" and considered her current situation, she placed the clues together and made a good guess that she was in the Middle Ages in France. Even if her history knowledge was limited, she could guess that she was in the early Bourbons. As she listened to the narrator, she was sat on her metal board unenthusiastically and let it bring her out into the cold winter morning.

Just as she was brought out of the chateau, Lin Sanjiu pulled down a red velvet curtain and wrapped it around herself. Her red silhouette stood out amidst the white snowfield as the platform moved forward steadily.

Time flowed at a different pace within "Time Travel". It had actually been more than 30 minutes since she had entered this place, yet the story was just beginning.

Her meeting with King Henry only lasted for a few symbolic minutes. Lin Sanjiu observed the historically famous Good King Henry with interest. Other than that, she didn't do anything else. After receiving the invitation to attend a ball in the palace, the metal board brought her out of it.

"However, once she left the palace, Gabrielle's carriage was stopped."

As the voice of the narrator rang out, Lin Sanjiu narrowed her eyes and stood up from her platform. A man with a medium but sturdy build was in front of her. If that black-haired man wasn't on a horse, he would probably be shorter than her by a bit. Judging from his attire, he was probably an aristocrat. The people behind him were obviously the servants he brought along for hunting. He looked at Lin Sanjiu with a mixture of tolerance, maliciousness, hatred and other emotions... It all summed up to a twisted expression which made her feel uncomfortable just looking at his face.

"My dear Gabrielle," he said sweetly. The tone of his voice reminded Lin Sanjiu of a serpent. "I wish I could say it was a coincidence to meet you here."

Even after waiting for a few seconds, the narrator did not speak.

"Since we are both heading home, why don't we travel together. Oh, that's unless you have somewhere else you want to go?" the man laughed mockingly. Then, he tugged at his horse and pulled his horse up to Lin Sanjiu's platform. He rode beside her, keeping up with her pace.

"What does he want?" Just as Lin Sanjiu was wondering about the man's background, he bent over from his horse. He flashed a wide grin and showed an overly kind expression. With a whispery voice, he slowly spoke to Lin Sanjiu, "As your husband, there is something I want to remind you. Ever since you've gotten close to the king, someone has been harboring a grudge against you. I hope you haven't forgotten a rumor we have around here. Queen Margaret is from the House of Valois and they have passed down their secret dark arts over generations."

"Gabrielle shuddered. When she looked up once again, she realized that her husband had already made a turn and ridden away. After her affair with the king had been exposed, her husband rarely returned to their chateau..."

Lin Sanjiu couldn't help scratching her hair in frustration.

"What sort of complicated relationship is this!"

The queen wanted to kill her, and her husband seemed to be the first person to cheer for the queen if she succeeded.

Now that she knew that there were characters in the story that were against her, Lin Sanjiu felt a little relieved. Considering her circumstance, if she defended herself against any attacks from Queen Margaret, she could probably survive and complete this first round.

"What are those so-called secret dark arts?" Lin Sanjiu thought to herself as she returned to the chateau. Gabrielle called Vera over and both of them started busily preparing for the ball that night. In reality, Vera was the only one that was busy. Lin Sanjiu sat crosslegged on her platform. Her wings were slightly arched, she was already in her hypersensory state and was prepared for any attacks around her.

Hei Zeji had given her some tips about why her combat capabilities were lacking and how she should fight with her hypersensory state. Even though he was very vague about it, that little bit of information was the only thing Lin Sanjiu could rely on to hone her techniques.

Other than criticizing Lin Sanjiu for relying only on her evolved abilities and physical strength to fight, Hei Zeji also mentioned that her movements were not fluid at all, saying that she moved with an abysmal level of animatronic stiffness and that she was deaf and blind. When Lin Sanjiu asked Hei Zeji for a more concrete explanation, he was immediately irritated by her and did not elaborate more. "When you're fighting, you'll understand." That was his only answer.

How was she going to understand it now?

"Abysmal level of animatronic stiffness?" Lin Sanjiu stood up on

her platform. Feeling somewhat curious, she threw a punch outward.

At that moment, she was in the middle of a large lively ball. There were many exquisitely dressed men and women. They were raising their wine goblets. Flowers have been woven into their hairs as they conversed loudly and cheerfully. A few artists who were clearly from the School of Fontainebleau sat at the corner creating their oil paintings.

Among them, only one person caught her attention for a brief moment.

That person was a beautiful woman with long blonde hair which grew way past her neck. She had a graceful yet alluring aura. Her bright and gorgeous long gown flowed down from her chair. She was so eye-catching that it was difficult to ignore her presence. However, the woman looked somewhat unhappy. She sat in her seat staring coldly and did not even cast a single glance at Henry IV. That woman was indeed Queen Margaret.

"That is the woman that wants to get rid of me?" Lin Sanjiu muttered quietly to herself as she threw another punch aimlessly. She accidentally hit the wine goblet of a gentleman who was holding it in his hand. The latter let out a sound of surprise. Obviously, under the control of the "Time Travel" experience, he laughed and apologized, "I'm sorry. I nearly dirtied the duchess' dress." After that, he walked away unhurriedly.

Lin Sanjiu sighed. She didn't quite understand the situation.

With her experience in four different worlds, she had some basic combat knowledge. For example, she knew that when she threw a punch, she shouldn't just move her shoulders. She had to stand stable, pull back, and draw additional strength from her waist, abdomen, and her back so that the force of the punch would not be merely from her wrist but her entire upper body. This was the way to deliver an effective and powerful punch.

Lin Sanjiu felt that she was already doing very well. Even if she was throwing a punch, she was already drawing the strength from her upper body, how could that even be called "stiff"?

Besides, she had keen sight and hearing. They worked very well.

As these thoughts surfaced in her mind, Lin Sanjiu suddenly sensed something. Before her mind could even react, her body had already entered her hypersensory state.

Lin Sanjiu could not really describe what had happened in that instant. She only knew from the sensation she felt from the back of her head, her back, her calves and every inch of her skin was telling her that the space behind her had collapsed.

Before she could turn her head, she already felt the strong pull behind her created from the collapsed space. It was as if a small black hole had opened behind her. Lin Sanjiu was pulled from her platform with a woosh. She flew backward like a feather without any resistance.

The guests stopped their conversations and watched her in amazement. They were completely unaffected by this strong suction. Just as the people turned their heads to watch Lin Sanjiu, a subtle smile appeared on Queen Margaret's beautiful face.

"Damn it!"

Lin Sanjiu swore furiously. She finally had some idea of what Hei Zeji meant.

Who were the people standing behind her just moments before? What were they doing before that black hole appeared? What was that thing that was creating this suction force?

Even with her hypersensory state, these questions remained unanswered. She was certainly deaf and blind!

These fleeting thoughts flashed through her mind instantaneously. Extending her wings fully, Lin Sanjiu stirred up a strong gust of wind. At the same time, she managed to thrust one

of her wings into a nearby pillar. Her body fluttered raggedly in mid-air with her feet off the ground. Before she could even steady herself, a black, rectangular shadow flew past her.

Her other wing seemed to react even faster than Lin Sanjiu's consciousness. It extended backward and caught the object. Though her metal board platform was now riddled with holes, Lin Sanjiu was thankful that she didn't lose it.

"The player had already left her metal board for 6 seconds," the narrator announced with the same light-hearted tone.

Lin Sanjiu grabbed her hole-riddled metal board with one hand. Trying her best to move against the intense suction force, she held on tightly to the palace pillar with her other hand. At that moment, her hair and legs were just floating horizontally in the air and she was still being drawn backward. If she just released her grip a little, she would be pulled further backward.

Lin Sanjiu struggled to look behind her and almost forgot to breathe.

Her eyes swept carelessly at the scene behind her. She noticed a middle-aged man with a wide frivolous smile. He was holding a brush in his hand and there was a half-completed painting in front of him. He had already captured half of the ball scene in his work. He was now facing Lin Sanjiu. Upon closer inspection, the man had already depicted the guests, servants, decorations and the portion of the table surrounding Gabrielle. Even though he composed them with just a few strokes, he managed to capture the essence of the vibrancy of the surrounding.

The only blank spot was the area where "Gabrielle" was standing.

"Come into this painting. Quick. I am almost done."

Lin Sanjiu could almost hear the short artist beckoning to her softly.

"So, this is the secret dark arts that Queen Margaret can use?" Lin

Sanjiu thought to herself.

[An Unfinished Oil Painting]

A second-rate artist who had been despised by the art scene in the art capital of the world, Italy, had finally found the secret to becoming a master artist. If my drawings aren't lifelike enough, I just have to pull a living person into the painting, right?

Instructions: while the target is unaware, the artist will draw the surroundings of the target, when his art is almost completed, the target would be pulled into the painting.

Just when Lin Sanjiu felt like her nails were about to be ripped from her fingers, the narrator's voice rang out once again.

"A player has been affected by an activated Special Item. Please note that if the player can avoid this calamity, she might get a chance of obtaining the item."

Chapter 342: Murderous Intent Fully Exposed

Lin Sanjiu waved her hand and converted her platform into a card. After storing the card in her body, Lin Sanjiu hugged the pillar tightly with both her arms. The muscles from her fingertips to her chest started hurting as she tried her best to withstand the suction force. As the artist added brushstroke to his painting every now and then, the suction force from the painting grew stronger and stronger. It had only been five or six seconds but Lin Sanjiu could feel her body trembling as exhaustion set in.

If this continues, Lin Sanjiu knew she would be dragged into the painting.

She forced her pounding heart to calm down. At that very moment, she couldn't think of any way out of this predicament. She ran through all the Special Items and abilities she had in her mind and realized that she couldn't think of anything that could help her right now. While she gradually grew more and more anxious about the situation, she turned to look behind her once more and realized that the artist was standing beside another pillar.

The guests and other artists had already moved aside to avoid getting in the way of the two people. Though they were visibly startled, their reactions were still very unusual. It was as though they were just watching two people squabbling. Lin Sanjiu wondered how this situation actually played out in the story. Lin Sanjiu narrowed her eyes and took another glance at her target through the strong gale that the suction force created. Clenching her teeth, she pulled her wings out from the pillar she was holding and released her grip.

A fraction of a second later, her body along with her skeletal wings flew toward the painting without any resistance, as if a piece

of dried leaf in the wind. Lin Sanjiu's body was almost reaching the canvas. A glint of delight finally flashed across the artist's eyes.

The next second, however, his elation was cut short. Lin Sanjiu's body stopped moving.

When Lin Sanjiu was just a few millimeters away from the painting, her wings created a sharp grating sound as they scratched the pillar. Sparks flew due to the friction. Lin Sanjiu barely managed, but she got a grip on the pillar with her wings. After that, she quickly thrust her skeletal wings deep into the pillar. Even though her body was still floating weightlessly in the air, Lin Sanjiu felt that a sense of relief washed over her as her pair of strong wings held her in place. Her body was covered in cold sweat and she felt as though her heart was almost bursting out from her chest.

"It's my turn now," she said softly as she aimed a kick at the easel.

She avoided the canvas. Just as the tip of her feet was about to touch the easel, she pulled her feet upward such that it tipped the easel forward. Before the canvas could touch her legs, she quickly withdrew them. She curled her body and reached forward, stretching her arms. She tapped the easel with her hand.

However, nothing happened.

Her [Planar World] was not activated. Nothing was changed into a card. Just as the easel was about to touch the ground, the artist quickly grabbed the easel with his hand. The suction force suddenly started again.

Lin Sanjiu was flabbergasted.

The item weight limit that her [Planar World] had already reached one and a half ton after the last level up. Lin Sanjiu also knew that she could not convert any living thing into a card. However, that easel should not be affected by both limitations. She didn't know why her ability failed.

When Lin Sanjiu noticed that the artist was about to pull his easel backward, she became hasty. She disregarded her uncertainty and launched a kick toward the artist. With her current height, she could easily reach the artist with her leg and kick him to the ground. However, when the tip of her feet nearly touched the artist's head, the muscles on her leg contracted. As if she had a sudden cramp, her leg tensed up and she drew her leg back sliding past the artist without touching him.

Lin Sanjiu exhaled and narrowed her eyes. She even pulled her wings out of the pillar. She shot her body toward the artist. A mere second before she nearly got suck into the painting, Lin Sanjiu raised her hand and struck the artist's chest with a slap.

With a quick rush of air, the artist and the painting disappeared. Lin Sanjiu fell from mid-air hitting the ground with a thud. By then, she had a new card in her hand: [An Unfinished Oil Painting].

If she didn't sense that the artist was not emitting any heat through her hypersensory state, she would really have mistaken the artist for a real human. From the beginning, that Special Item wasn't that painting but it was the artist.

She finally understood why Hei Zeji said she was blind.

After she stood up from the ground, the narrator's voice rang out again:

"Gabrielle and Joseph's quarrel drew many of the guests' attention. As one of Queen Margaret's lovers, Joseph was always willing to stick up for the queen..."

With the clue from the narration, Lin Sanjiu found the baron called Joseph. "He seemed to the person who had brought the artists to the ball. He is one of the queen's lackeys. "

Sitting far from Lin Sanjiu, separated by groups of guests, Queen Margaret's face became icy cold once more. However, that did not diminish the woman's beauty. Lin Sanjiu stared directly at the

woman's cold azure eyes for a few seconds and made a decision.

The only requirement to complete "Time Travel" was that the player had to survive until the end of the round. There weren't any rules stating that she couldn't kill others.

Even though Lin Sanjiu had avoided being killed by that attack, there was no telling what would happen next. Lin Sanjiu did not know when she would be attacked again and whether she would be able to overcome it next time. Rather than waiting passively for other people to attack her, she preferred taking a proactive role to strike first.

Lin Sanjiu took out her platform again and placed it back on the track. She stood on it once more before that one minute limit.

Her action seemed to signal to the others that she had her guard down. Queen Margaret looked at her once and turned her head away. This wasn't strange because the track she was on was quite a distance from the throne. If "Gabrielle" remained on her platform, there was no way she could get close to Queen Margaret.

But, of course, Lin Sanjiu didn't plan to play by the rules.

While she was still in the set of an ongoing scene, she could not leave the place but she could move around with her board within a limited area. As she observed Queen Margaret's every move, Lin Sanjiu pretended as if she had slid her platform accidentally to the part of the track that was closest to the throne.

Even though that was the closest spot, she was still a few hundred meters from the throne.

When Lin Sanjiu took a closer look at Queen Margaret, she realized that the woman, as elegant as a swan, looked even more graceful and dainty than she expected. The woman had a svelte figure and her golden hair was in an intricate updo. When Lin Sanjiu stopped, the queen was saying something to her servant. As she did that, the pearls on her neck shimmered in the light. It was

as though that woman had been beautifully carved from diamonds.

Even though her opponent was very beautiful, Lin Sanjiu didn't have even a hint of sympathy for that woman.

In fact, for Lin Sanjiu, it was best if the queen was just fragile and weak. Considering that the woman probably had more Special Items and so-called "secret dark arts", Lin Sanjiu decided to just end that woman's life with a direct physical attack.

Before Queen Margaret finished giving instructions to her servant, Lin Sanjiu took action.

She had been hiding in the crowd and waiting for some time so she was fully prepared to launch this attack.

She wrapped her upper body with her [Defence Forcefield], then extended her skeletal wings menacingly, displaying her full intention to kill. With successive quick steps, she accelerated toward Queen Margaret at full speed. She moved so quickly that she was leaving afterimages behind her.

If this was a reconstruction of the past, logically speaking, the NPCs should not have any combat skills. Yet, just to be on the safe side, Lin Sanjiu opened her mouth to speak when she nearly reached Queen Margaret's dress.

Before she could ask "have you heard of route 300", Queen Margaret turned her head slightly. Lin Sanjiu was suddenly hit by a force which threw her backward. She didn't even know what had happened.

The moment Lin Sanjiu hit the ceiling, she finally noticed that there was a small vortex in front of Queen Margaret's body.

Even though she was in her hypersensory state, she didn't detect even the slightest sign that it was there. The air current surrounding the queen was still the same as before. However, it changed when Queen Margaret raised her hand. She grabbed the air current like soft clay and created a fast-moving air vortex.

The vortex was not large but it swallowed and dissipated the force from Lin Sanjiu's forward thrust. When the vortex unraveled, Lin Sanjiu felt the reflected force of her own strength combined with the added attack from the queen. That huge force hit her chest directly.

Even with her [Defence Forcefield], Lin Sanjiu could hear crisp cracking sounds in her ears as she felt her rib bones being shattered. In a split second, all her organs that had been damaged by that impact felt as though they were going to explode. Blood rushed to Lin Sanjiu's brain. Her face suddenly became blood red.

Lin Sanjiu lost all control of her body and fell heavily to the ground. She just couldn't imagine that she wasn't even able to endure a single blow from Queen Margaret as that woman raised her hand.

When Queen Margaret stood up from her seat and walked toward her, Lin Sanjiu could only struggle to prop herself up.

"Enough!"

King Henry roared angrily and stopped Queen Margaret in her tracks.

"Whatever the grudges you have against each other, is it necessary to create such an embarrassing scene?" King Henry's tone was filled with wrath. However, his anger was naturally directed to his own wife. He strode toward "Gabrielle" and suppressed his fury, "Come with me."

Apparently, in the story, the Queen and Gabrielle had only quarreled verbally.

Lin Sanjiu couldn't even stand up right now. When Lin Sanjiu heard the narrator's reminder that she had been away from her platform for 27 seconds, she held her abdomen and moved toward her metal board, almost crawling.

Once she sat on her platform, the metal board immediately

moved along the tracks, trailing behind King Henry.

The blood from the corner of the mouth dripped through the holes in the metal board. It trickled down on the track leaving a long trail of blood behind her. Queen Margaret chased after them as if she was reluctant to back off. Finally, for some reason, the woman stopped and returned to the main ballroom.

"I think I'm safe now." Lin Sanjiu thought to herself as she was struck by bouts of dizziness. While her heart palpitated, she couldn't help letting out a sigh of relief.

"Thankfully, King Henry was willing to stand up for his lover... Queen Margaret is just too strong. " Lin Sanjiu thought.

The man walked very quickly so Lin Sanjiu only saw his back. He seemed very unhappy. The two people walked along a corridor of the side palace for quite a few minutes. Neither of them said a word.

Leaving the brightly lit ballroom, the side palace was unusually quiet. It was so quiet that the sound of chafing fabrics as the king moved was ever so prominent.

As Lin Sanjiu listened to the pulsing sound of her blood flowing through her body, she overheard two female maids speaking softly:

"Yes, I heard that on the day they got married, the king and the queen didn't even look once at each other. They simply looked straight ahead and completed the ceremony..."

"Yes. I even heard that King Charles had to press down her head for her to agree.."

Lin Sanjiu looked up, feeling confused.

"Huh?"

"If that was the case, Queen Margaret had no feelings for King Henry?"

Lin Sanjiu couldn't help remembering the baron called Joseph. "That's right. He is one of Queen Margaret's lovers..."

Initially, Lin Sanjiu thought that Queen Margaret was jealous of Gabrielle even though she had her own lovers. However, based on what the two maids said, Margaret definitely didn't have a reason to be against Gabrielle...

"Why would she—"

"I can't believe you subdued that artist," King Henry said softly as he turned around in the darkness, revealing half his face. A foreboding smile appeared on his face.

Chapter 343: [Timely Rain Song Zeji](#)

Despite her poor shape, Lin Sanjiu had to muster the strength to stand up and confront the person in front of her. As she jerked up from the ground, a sudden feeling of pain struck her abdomen. It almost tore her apart. Then, everything swirled together.

She was in a life or death situation, and Lin Sanjiu knew full well that she could not fall victim to the giddiness now. She blinked hard and made a considerable amount of effort to chase the feeling away. Only then did the blurry King Henry become clear again.

"Why..."

Her question stuck in her throat. For a moment, she didn't even know what question she had to ask.

King Henry ignored Lin Sanjiu's unfinished question. He spun his body around, like slow-motion in a movie, and faced Lin Sanjiu. Half of his face was hidden in the shadow, showing only his mouth—now-curved into a sly, devilish grin under the glimmer of light.

Suddenly, waves of eldritch force field came pouring out of him. Lin Sanjiu could see that as the force field moved, it distorted something in its path. Even the light emitted from candles looked a little bit crooked to her now.

Set against this strange phenomenon, Lin Sanjiu couldn't help but roll her metal board backward. At the same time, she activated her hypersensory and [Defence Forcefield]. After finishing casting her defensive stance, Lin Sanjiu shifted her attention to the man again.

The space in front of her now looked like a piece of shattered glass, fragmented and craggy.

"Isn't that obvious?"

Then, King Henry moved two silent steps forward. Once he stepped into his 'domain,' he looked disfigured as if he had been

refracted countless time.

"Because...I am a player too," King Henry looked out at her, smiling amiably. Then, he went off to finish his sentence, with his ever gentle voice, "My mission in Time Travel is to find a character named Gabrielle, so I can kill her."

Although Lin Sanjiu knew his hostility all along, his words still turned her blood to ice. Her throat felt raw as she forced out her doubt, "It is impossible. You're not stepping on a metal board—"

"From my side, you're not stepping on a metal board either," King Henry chipped in, his words full of mockery, "You look just like an ordinary woman in the Middle Ages."

As soon as those words were spoken, he raised one of his hands forward, and one behind his back.

Although she had kept her eyes peeled, Lin Sanjiu was still taken by surprise. She felt something heavy pressing against her organs from her back like a million pounds of pressure. She couldn't hold back the urge and vomited a mouthful of blood. At the same time, she concentrated her [Defence Forcefield] around her back, trying her very best to counteract the intense pressure that came from nowhere.

She struggled to look over her shoulders, but it was a wasted effort. There was nothing at her back. The side palace was empty, void of anything even sound. After that, she tried to inch to a side, yet she was thwarted for the second time. The pressure had completely pinned her on the ground; she could not move at all. If she struggled harder, she would hear her bones cracking as if they would shatter at any moment.

After waiting for some time, King Henry frowned. He was quite surprised that the woman in front of him was still resisting.

"Hoh? You don't seem to be using any special ability, yet you can resist my special ability. I guess I've underestimated you. Your

body is quite strong," as he spoke, his smile gradually left his face until it turned into a thin line, "Seems like I made a good decision last time by not attacking you recklessly."

Then, King Henry lifted his hands again, seemingly preparing for another move. Regardless of what he wanted to do, Lin Sanjiu knew that once he finished his action, she would be doomed.

The intensity of the pressure that kept her pinned on the ground was getting stronger. It was so immense that calling it a "force" would be to trivialize it. Lin Sanjiu felt she was a mouse trapped inside a jar, and the jar was collapsed right above her immobilizing her.

Under such circumstance, taking another of King Henry's attacks head-on was something she did not welcome. Seeing that her opponent had already raised his hand, she quickly summoned one of her cards.

Bam!

Something heavy fell in her hands. She had no idea what kind of thing she had summoned in the heat of the moment until a heap of bright orange cat litter spilled from the bag opening and shrouded her in orange dust.

"Hmm?"

The person who had been trapped in his special ability had suddenly gone into the ether. King Henry was stupefied, and he stood in his original spot in a trance. As he subconsciously lowered his arms, a woman rolled out from the thick orange fog.

Lin Sanjiu did not dare to stop as she had a minimal time to make her moves. She grabbed a handful of cat litter and threw it at King Henry. Then, seizing her golden opportunity before King Henry could return to his senses, she frantically rushed to the very far end of the side palace that had not been affected by King Henry's special ability.

Even after Lin Sanjiu'd freed herself from King Henry's clutches, the feeling of being almost crushed to death was still fresh as if it had been seared in her body. Right until this point, she still had no idea how she escaped from that domain. When she skidded to a stop with her battered body and spread opened her bony wings, Lin Sanjiu realized that she had forgotten something.

Right now, King Henry was standing beside her metal board. He seemed to look for something. "Your board... It should be around here, right?" Lin Sanjiu's metal board was invisible to anybody but her, so King Henry couldn't see where the board was. Since he could not see it, he just simply kicked the air twice to test his luck. However, the Goddess of Luck seemed to have abandoned him. His attempts narrowly missed Lin Sanjiu's metal board twice.

"What if he can take my metal board—" Lin Sanjiu's heart beat in a flustered rhythm as the thought emerged.

She quickly calmed herself down and forced a cold smile on her face, "You can't find it. I've kept it well-hidden. Now, all I have to do is kill you within one minute and return to my board."

Tilting his head, King Henry glanced at Lin Sanjiu doubtfully. He couldn't tell whether was Lin Sanjiu telling the truth or telling lies. As such, he decided not to leave Lin Sanjiu's original spot and grunted.

"Come and try for yourself," as he spoke, he waved his hand and shattered another piece of space beside him, turning it into another of his domain, "Just throw everything you got at me."

[Picasso]

The seemingly incomprehensible cubism and abstract painting had shown fantastic utility after it became an ability. Just like Picasso could present his multiple-dimensional masterpiece on a flat canvas, the master of this ability could break any space into smaller pieces and combine them into any planar drawing that he desired.

Of course, objects that existed in the space would change according to the space. In the painting "Weeping Woman," the positions of the mouth and nose of the woman completely defied the natural human body structure. The master of this ability was fully aware of this, and he knew full well that this could cause death. However, in comparison to the greatness of art, the life of human worth nothing.

"Anything that gets past this domain will become part of my painting," King Henry stared at Lin Sanjiu as he kept his two hands in the air. It seemed that his [Drawing of Picasso] would be revoked once he placed his hands down. He continued to taunt Lin Sanjiu, "Show me what you got. I would like to see how can you come near me."

Lin Sanjiu panicked. She found the task was getting more difficult.

She was severely injured, and King Henry's special ability was extremely tricky to deal with. Fighting him in close quarters was unwise as his [Picasso] gave him both an unbreachable defense and offense. Also, she was unsure whether King Henry still had something else up his sleeve. For example, a special stand-off item would be deadly to her. While she was looking for a countermeasure, the narrator began to countdown. It seemed to her that killing King Henry within a minute was an impossible mission.

Beads of cold sweat oozed from her forehead. Lin Sanjiu searched her inventories from one Special Item to the next in her mind, but she could not find anything that could save her right now.

Mrs. Manas once criticized her that she relied on her items too much. Hei Zeji also told her that she would one day meet her nemesis if she refused to change her combat style. However, it was too late. Lin Sanjiu could do nothing now but curse herself inwardly for not realizing this problem earlier.

As the minutes ticked on, King Henry became more relaxed.

He knew that Lin Sanjiu couldn't harm him. She was like a rat in a hole. Even if he remained standing in place doing nothing but letting time tick away, there was only one end for the "Gabrielle" in front of him: death.

Just as Lin Sanjiu gritted her teeth and planned to launch another blind attack on King Henry, the familiar sound of wings flapping drifted through the air into her ears.

"Hey, I just warded off an assailant. I guess you should be in trouble now," Never once had Lin Sanjiu felt that Hei Zeji's unenthusiastic voice would sound like the voice of an angel to her. She held her breath and listened carefully to what he was going to say next, "To be honest, I doubt this paper crane can find its way to you. Nevertheless, if you can hear me, from now on, do as I said."

Timely Rain was the nickname for Song Jiang, a leader of outlaws who lived during the Song Dynasty of China. He always comes to the aid of the person in need in the nick of time, hence the nickname. The author is probably trying to bring out the notion of Hei Zeji being a "timely rain" for Lin Sanjiu by changing his name from "Hei Zeji" to "Song Zeji" as shown in the title.

Chapter 344: Engage! Queen Margaret!

"Player has left the platform for thirty-one seconds. Please return to the platform within a minute."

As the voice of the narrator died away, the paper crane fell silent as well.

Hei Zeji only gave Lin Sanjiu a few tips. He had no idea what kind of opponent, or what kind of situation Lin Sanjiu would be dealing with, so he thought it would be the best just gave her a general idea. Either way, Lin Sanjiu had no other choices left. The crane was the only thing she could rely on.

"All active skills have flaws. There is no such thing as "perfect" abilities or Special Items in this world," as Lin Sanjiu repeated those words in her mind, she quickly cooled herself down. After she took a few seconds to settle down, she narrowed her eyes and observed King Henry and his [Picasso].

So the flaw of this special ability is "area?"

If [Picasso] could extend indefinitely, then the Posthuman disguised as King Henry would have long become the dominator of the world. Nevertheless, King Henry was extremely cautious. He employed his [Picasso] around him to act as a perfect shield that completely protected him from any possible attacks. Even if Lin Sanjiu successfully figured out the flaw of [Picasso], how was she supposed to make use of the weakness to shatter King Henry's perfect shield?

Taking a deep breath, Lin Sanjiu closed her eyes to recall the lesson that Hei Zeji's had taught her.

"When you see a forest, a sea, or a rocky shore, you naturally think that they are parts of the 'environment,' so they are part of nature. The tree, the sea, and the rocks: all of them are creations of this planet. However, don't forget that we humans were also born

from this planet, so why do you have to segregate yourself from the environment?"

As Lin Sanjiu entered the hypersensory state, she felt an intense pain coursing through every nerve ending of her body for a brief second before it slowly receded. Then, a more primitive, solid sense emerged from the depth of her body. That was the voice of her body that was constantly sending information it detected to her. However, she could only interpret the information efficiently after she entered the hypersensory state.

Hence, even though Lin Sanjiu kept her eyes closed, the domain of [Picasso] was so much clearer to her than when her eyes were closed.

The optical illusion caused by [Picasso] might fool the eyes, but it could never deceive the skin, the pores, or the hair. They transmitted everything they sensed without fail to the person's mind.

As if touching a poorly crafted sculpture, Lin Sanjiu had a complete grasp of the domain inside the [Picasso.] She knew full well which part had caved in, which area had risen, and which region had been moved away. It was such an absorbing feeling, and she simply could not withdraw herself from it. She was so immersed in the feeling that she almost had forgotten that about the time limitation she had and the enemy in front of her.

As her breathing rhythm slowed, the side palace fell into a strange pool of silence.

Had King Henry not needed to keep his hands in the air to maintain the [Picasso,] he would have lowered them to rub his eyes lest he was placed under some illusion.

Lin Sanjiu was standing right in front of him. That was what his retinas received and conveyed to his brain. In spite of that, his eyes seemed to skip Lin Sanjiu involuntarily. It was as if she wasn't his enemy but a candle, or a carpet, or a pillar that was not worth his

attention.

There were several occasions King Henry had to tear himself away from subconsciously ignoring Lin Sanjiu and look for her again. Only to find that she hadn't moved from her place at all.

She was so invisible that she was barely noticeable. A small smile appeared at the corner of Lin Sanjiu's lips.

"When you begin to realize that you're part of the environment and that the environment is part of you, you've already earned yourself the strongest weapon of all time. A weapon that no one can steal from you."

At first, it was kind of hard to understand the message, but as Lin Sanjiu took a tentative step in her hypersensory state, the meaning of what Hei Zeji said burst upon her.

The information the space transmitted to her within this one step would take up to ten pages to be written. The air flow, the heat from the candlelight, the small heap of dust that fell from the beam just a few seconds before...

At this moment, everything in the world seemed to flow through Lin Sanjiu. She even had the feeling that she had joined this torrent of the world and embarked on a journey with it to billow through the surface of the earth.

About forty meters ahead, the carpet under King Henry was laid slightly askew. The edge of the carpet didn't adhere to the floor but somewhat overlapped on another piece of carpet which made it look marginally higher than other parts of the carpet.

"Have you given up a-already?" King Henry sneered, his words were full of derision. However, he stammered at the last word of his sentence.

He had a dark foreboding feeling since Lin Sanjiu stopped moving. He couldn't bring himself to trust his gut, nor he could explain what was going on around him either. Be that as it may, if

he could taunt Lin Sanjiu to make the first move, he thought he might be able to find an opening.

"Hey, I said—"

Before he could even speak his mind, the woman who had been keeping her eyes closed suddenly moved.

Her speed was neither fast nor slow because he could see her every step while, at the same time, she had artfully completed her series of actions before you blinked your eyes.

Utilizing her heel as the center of rotation, Lin Sanjiu spun her body around and kicked the red carpet into the air. With her eyes closed, she extended her arm and caught the carpet. Then, she yanked her arm and threw the carpet in her hand behind her.

King Henry did not realize that the carpet he was standing had lost the lower layer. As the carpet slowly dropped to the floor, he growled, "What the hell are you doing?"

Even with the most precise instrument, nobody could know how much a person would fall when the carpet dropped. This kind of subtle change was beyond the comprehension of the other person involved; however, in Lin Sanjiu "eyes" it was the deciding factor for her to come out ahead in this battle.

This was because she had already proved her speculation.

"Among the different parts of the environment, the easiest object for us to reshape is the air," his was the third message and last message Hei Zeji said through the paper crane. He said, "Every movement of a person changes the flow of air regardless of the magnitude of the strength. Do you think that we, as a Growth-type, can only use the advantages of our tremendous muscle growth and strength to crush our opponents? Do you know that if we hit the air at the proper angle and with enough strength, we could bring forth some amazing effect?"

Lin Sanjiu did not answer King Henry as she merged herself with

the darkness like a dark wraith. She moved lithely in the air as she leaped from the floor. All of her movements—from how she bent her legs, to the way she crouched down and stood up—were so connected and natural that they were delightful to watch. They seemed to be light, but they did pack a hefty punch. Suddenly, she resettled her right bony wing and shot them into the air in front of her.

"Are you blind—"

Before King Henry could finish his mocking or retaliate, something blurry drifted past his eyes. In the next second, he felt an intense pain spreading from his left foot. He groaned, and his body quivered.

This was all Lin Sanjiu needed. The moment his body quivered in pain, the arms he desperately sustained up in the air all that time betrayed him and swayed down.

Lin Sanjiu felt that she had been waiting all her life for the moment a lapse appeared in [Picasso]. Kicking the floor with her heel, she propelled herself forward. She was extremely fast—so fast that even her thought could not keep up with her supersonic speed.

Before Hei Zeji gave her the lecture, her movements hadn't been so smooth. She would first steady herself and condense energy with her feet, followed by her legs, and then lean her upper torso forward to release the condensed energy. This not only made her slower but also lessened her attack power. That was also why Hei Zeji kept on saying that her body moved with an abysmal level of animatronic stiffness.

After half a minute, King Henry quickly raised his arms and reestablished his [Picasso]. To his dismay, it was too late. The battle had already concluded.

"W-why—" King Henry widened his eyes, staring fixedly at the bone structure that impaled his body. "What is this—"

He arduously moved his blood-red eyes to his left foot. His left foot looked like it had been blown up by a bomb. His shoe and half of his toes were gone. There was nothing left behind aside from a pile of blood and pulp.

"Oh, you mean that," Lin Sanjiu had already opened her eyes. Her amber eyes glittered brightly in the dim side palace as she explained to King Henry, "When I kicked you just now, I reshaped the air into spikes. If you hadn't dropped outside the domain of [Picasso,] my attack might never have landed on you."

Although King Henry understood every word she said, but he showed a vacuous expression that he never had before.

The prominent nose, deep-set eyes, and that curly hair that belonged to a middle-aged European man gradually disappear from the Posthuman, like an ebbing tide, and revealed the pedestrian-like, dark-skinned face underneath.

Lin Sanjiu did not know his name even after he was dead.

"Player has left the platform for fifty-two seconds. Player is advised to return to platform post haste."

Lin Sanjiu let out a sigh and tore her eyes away from the corpse. After she stepped on her platform, the narrator instantly fell silent.

After that, she took out a paper crane and replied to Hei Zeji, "Thank you. You're such a lifesaver. I've just defeated an assailant too."

After she finished it in a few simple sentences, she released the paper crane. The crane flew and fluttered away behind her.

"Damn it!" She cursed herself inwardly for relaxing too soon after she emerged victorious from a battle. She had forgotten that there was still another person standing right behind her.

As she twisted her head to a side, her gaze met Queen Margaret's graceful and charming as a swan but expressionless visage.

For a moment, her body tensed up. Then, it relaxed in the next second. Lin Sanjiu took on a perplexed expression and looked at the paper crane, the one she released for Hei Zeji had landed on Queen Margaret's finger.

"I warn you," as a lock of golden hair slipped down Queen Margaret's face, a fierce tone that was very familiar to Lin Sanjiu came from her cherry lips, "If you dare to tell anybody about what happened here, I swear I will kill you."

Chapter 345: I Promise This will be a Chapter with New Updates

"Ahem, so..." Although she had many doubts in the combat power she displayed during her previous battle, the first question that escaped her mouth when she met up with Hei Zeji was not in the least bit related to her combat capability. "Why did you choose to play a female role?"

She knew that Hei Zeji had to be very embarrassed, so she tried her best to keep her tone as normal as possible to avoid enraging him. Nevertheless, her empathy was not appreciated. Hei Zeji greeted her with a gloomy face.

"You waited for me for such a long time," Hei Zeji, who had just stepped out of the exit, grimaced and flashed Lin Sanjiu his set of eerie white teeth, the corner of his lips bereft of any smile, "Just to ask me that question?"

The entrance and exit of "Time Travel" was side by side. Once they were at the exit, they would find themselves at the place where the female staff member had greeted them when they entered "Time Travel." Suddenly, Lin Sanjiu's flesh crept as that female staff member emerged from the darkness. She whipped a pleasant smile on her face and walked up to Hei Zeji.

Waving a device over Hei Zeji's wrist, she commended, "Congratulations, mister. You have earned sixteen stamina points." Thanks to her, Hei Zeji's anger seemed to be smothered a bit.

Clear enough, both the characters Gabrielle and Queen Margaret walked on two different story-lines. In Gabrielle's story, Lin Sanjiu was caught in a trap designed by her "husband" in her chateau right after she killed King Henry. It took her an enormous amount of effort to free herself from the trap. In the end, she killed the player who took on the role of Gabrielle's "husband" and finished the story of Gabrielle.

With the two consecutive kill streak, Lin Sanjiu had gotten herself twelve stamina points. It was quite a lot, and she was satisfied. After she waited the minutes while resting outside the entrance, Hei Zeji finally emerged from the emptiness of the exit.

Of course, the graceful and alluring aura of Queen Margaret had left him without any trace.

"Why do you have to look at me like that?" When Hei Zeji felt Lin Sanjiu's fervent gaze, his fury knew no limit. He exploded and roared, "It was all because of you! If it weren't for you suddenly disappearing from my sight, why would I have selected a female role to go after you?! Who would have expected that all of the listed characters came from the same story!"

Lin Sanjiu did not expect this answer. Seeing that Hei Zeji was getting angrier, she forced down the urge to laugh at him. She comforted him and, at the same time, expressed her gratitude.

"That's not necessary." Hei Zeji was feeling somewhat awkward. He turned his head, not wanting to engage Lin Sanjiu's gaze and said stiffly, "Just mind your own business and stop causing me troubles."

"Okay, okay." Lin Sanjiu was between laughter and tears. Since she had spent some time with him, she knew that Hei Zeji was a paper tiger. He looked fierce, but in reality, he was not difficult to interact as long as you knew the trick to deal with him.

She stretched her arm and asked a question related to the combat technique, "Oh yeah, I haven't had a chance to ask you when we were inside. Could you explain more to me about that combat technique you taught me just now?"

It was that combat technique that helped Lin Sanjiu to turn the tide of battle. During her struggle with King Henry, she followed Hei Zeji's instruction meticulously and entered a wondrous state where she amalgamated herself with the environment. Then, with her new-found power, she defeated and eventually killed King

Henry. After she finished the fight, she couldn't help but felt surprised when she reviewed the whole process. She was clueless to how she achieved that state.

Hence, after she came out of "Time Travel," she tried to enter the state again. After a couple of attempts, however, she realized that she had lost the ability.

"I was surprised, to be honest. I never expected that you could grasp the information and comprehend it so quickly," Hei Zeji lounged against the door and said with a rather impatient tone, "Although you defeated a player with only a few bits of advice from me, in the end, you have not truly mastered this combat technique... Come over here."

A bad omen stirred Lin Sanjiu's heart when she saw the grin on Hei Zeji's lips. She knew very well that he was up to no good, but she followed his instruction and walked towards him anyhow.

She watched him fixing his hair and said slovenly, "It's pretty simple." At the moment she reached in front of him, he raised his foot and stomped on the ground, causing the ground to crack from the very heart of the collision to the outer edges until the area was filled with spider-web like cracks.

He was fast, and the onslaught of attack came too sudden. Lin Sanjiu wasn't prepared at all, and she flinched. Without sparing a second for her to regain her balance, Hei Zeji threw another attack in her face.

"The first thing to erase when you engage in a battle is your existence," Hei Zeji spoke as if he was unfazed by his violent movements. His voice was full of his usual calm and even tone, "In this world, people who can tap into and draw power from the hypersensory state can be more than just you and me."

As the first wave of attack accompanied by a sharp whiz came forth, Lin Sanjiu ducked and dodged the ambush at the critical moment, letting it narrowly whiz past her cheek. Her heart

palpitated as she convinced her wild mind to stop making a scene in her brain. Then, she entered the hypersensory state. Once her body had "awakened," it began to send all sort of information to her—

Only then she realized that the barrage of attacks that gained strength each time were not coming from Hei Zeji but rather from the waves of air currents in the surroundings. She seemingly had seen Hei Zeji tear the air into a couple of smaller strips of air like a tailor cutting a big cloth and gave them tremendous force. However, what made the air current so deadly was not the force that they contained but their unpredictable attack trajectories. They would appear and attack without warning.

Nevertheless, Lin Sanjiu was no longer the same as she was. She could effectively evade the assaulting air currents with ease when she entered her hypersensory state.

Just as she took a breath and bent down, Hei Zeji, who was standing not far away from her, smiled, "In the future, you might even encounter an opponent who can read your thoughts and counteract before you can enact whatever is in your mind. For example—"

It was already too late when Lin Sanjiu comprehended what his words meant. While she was airborne, she was hit by an oncoming air current. Her bones rattled, and her eyes dulled as she fell back to the ground.

"Didn't I tell you to erase your existence?" Hei Zeji stopped his attack. He drew his eyebrows together deeply as he criticized Lin Sanjiu, "I'm not telling you to learn how to stay invisible; keeping only your body invisible will not do the job. Your pace of breath, the hot air you exhale, the space you occupy: all these works like beacons to your enemy. They will draw them to you. For you to completely erase your existence, you must blend yourself into the environment. You have to learn how to conform to the air current without causing any extra airflow when you're moving, and

control the amount of heat you exhale when you breathe so that it will not alter the temperature of your surrounding. For hypersensory state practitioners, these are their weapons to counter their opponent. It's like a radar. When you disappear from your opponent's radar, then it's the right time for you to strike."

"But they still can see me, right?" huffed Lin Sanjiu after she helped herself up from the ground.

"Our eyes are probably the easiest sensory organs deceive," Hei Zeji scoffed. "It isn't that hard to confuse your opponent's vision. By the time they notice you, you've already sealed their fate... Now, why don't you deactivate your hypersensory state and look at me with your eyes? I'll show you how it's done."

Lin Sanjiu was shocked. When she looked up, Hei Zeji was in front of him with his hand curled into a fist, casting a shadow over her face. Just as she yanked her arm to guard herself, he tapped her bony wings from her behind.

This time, she was genuinely stunned. With a blank look, she turned her head to look behind her.

"Do you understand now?" Hei Zeji caressed a bone spur that protruded from her wings, "No matter what way you use, be it a Special Item, an evolved ability, utilize the principal of light, or just the afterimages produced after an ultra-fast movement... you have millions upon millions of ways to create an illusion to deceive your opponent."

"Indeed, he's right," Lin Sanjiu suddenly saw the light.

Currently, the two Special Items in her arsenal that could be used to create a visual illusion: [Cat Litter] and the book [How To Draw] that she obtained from the library. If she could include and link either Special Items in her attack combo, she might be able to outplay her opponent the next time she engaged in a battle.

"This is just the first step and also the foundation of the combat

technique I'm teaching you now," Hei Zeji walked out from her back and peered into the entrance. He seemed to be looking for something, "Since you've learned how to attack, let's move on to the next issue: what you should use to attack.

"There are three types of people: the first prefers to attack with evolved ability, and the second is more inclined to use Special Items. For me, I'm of the third type: I settle my opponent with my hands. They are all the same, by the way. The difference is just a matter of preference. However, as a Growth-type, our main ability usually has weak attack power. That being said, the higher your potential, the weaker your main ability," Hei Zeji tucked his hands into his pockets and continued his lecture while turning his head, "For instance, I still can't use my main ability in a fight ."

So not only my [Planar World] is useless?

Lin Sanjiu's eyes bulged. The question "what is your main ability" swayed into her mind and stayed there for a moment before it vanished. It wasn't that she didn't dare to voice the question, it was just she knew Hei Zeji would not engage in any conversation that he found troublesome or unnecessary, so she thought she might just as well save the topic until the time Hei Zeji was willing to tell her his secret.

"Also, if you're fighting an opponent on which you have no intel about his evolved ability or what kind of Special Items he possesses, and if you did not equip yourself with a life-saving ability that nobody can take from you... let me tell you: you might as well go home and hide well because you won't be able to survive well outside."

Lin Sanjiu nodded. Suddenly, the attack he used to attack her when he was still Queen Margaret came into her mind. She asked, "So, was the vortex you used to attack an evolved ability, or...?"

"That is the result after you have full control over your strength and the air current," Hei Zeji replied without expression, "That is

also the combat technique I'm going to teach you."

When Lin Sanjiu connected the fearsome vortex that flung her away to the "spike" she formed, she could not help but tremble with excitement, "If I can master this combat technique, would I be able to dish out an attack as powerful as that?"

"The way you describe your attack as a spike," Hei Zeji moved his gaze into the entrance of "Time Travel" before continuing, "Is wrong. From your description, it should be the power of your blow moving in the same pattern as the air current that enhances the wind. That explains why the "fist energy" was more powerful than usual and could injure that King Henry.

"That also means that you already understand this combat technique, albeit just a tip of the iceberg."

Before his voice died away, Hei Zeji moved a step forward and made a half turn. The intriguing feeling of both fast and slow came back to Lin Sanjiu again as Hei Zeji extended his arm forward and pushed the air.

It was a normal push, but when Lin Sanjiu saw this movement in her hypersensory state, it was as if a whole new world had unfolded before her eyes. When he pushed, the power he sent forward merged completely with the air current in front of him and formed into a menacing and strong force. The force then traveled fast, like a mighty beast, to the entrance.

"Aiya," the female staff member who kept lurking in the darkness was pushed out by this force. It was apparent that Hei Zeji had shown her mercy. Once she was outside, the air current disappeared into thin air along with the force.

"If you hold the force and keep it moving around you, then you'll have yourself a vortex of air. Of course, you still have a long way to go to reach that level. Anyway, you've learned the rudiment of this combat technique, so keep trying."

Lin Sanjiu nodded and fell silent. It was difficult to fathom what Hei Zeji had taught her. Also, with the information he sent to her through the paper crane earlier on, Lin Sanjiu felt she needed time—maybe lots of times—to digest the hefty amount of information.

While Hei Zeji waited for Lin Sanjiu to absorb the things he taught her, he sensed something. He furrowed his brows as he looked out at the entrance.

"Hey, I'm leaving."

Lin Sanjiu was startled. She stared at him and spoke hesitantly, "Why so sudden? Where are you going?"

"It's none of your business. I'll still be around," Hei Zeji replied impatiently. His expression was ugly, but it seemed to Lin Sanjiu that this time, he was trying to avoid something he really, really hated, "I don't like dealing with dummies. I've already made an exception for you. Two days is my limit. We'll part here; do whatever you want. Aren't you looking for somebody? Go now; you can still change your route if you retrace your steps."

Even though she knew Hei Zeji could not coach her forever, she did not expect their parting would arrive so soon. As Lin Sanjiu racked her brain for a reason to press him to stay longer, Hei Zeji had left nonchalantly.

Laying on the ground, the female staff member still carried out her job dutifully, "Player has left the attraction. Please purchase another ticket if you wish to enjoy our attraction again."

"Hey, wait for me," Lin Sanjiu shouted as she chased after Hei Zeji. When she arrived outside the entrance, Hei Zeji was no longer there. She did not even have a chance to say "we could keep in touch with the paper crane." Crestfallen, her shoulder slumped as she returned to the side of the female staff member.

"So, I have to clear "Time Travel" alone?"

When she was pondering whether she should continue "Time

Travel" or change to another route, Lin Sanjiu finally saw the reason why Hei Zeji suddenly wanted to leave so badly.

"Ah, we finally found you."

A group of four to five men and women with weird appearances: Posthumans. These were the description Lin Sanjiu had when she saw the group of people. As she examined the group, they'd entered the "Time Travel" through the Frog Route. Then, a young man, who seemed to be their leader, craned his head into the entrance of "Time Travel" and gave Lin Sanjiu a confident smile.

"Good day to you, miss. I'm Aker, from the Progressor Alliance. You're Lin Sanjiu, am I right? Great, we've been looking for you!"

Chapter 346: Aker's Plan

When Lin Sanjiu heard that they were from the Progressor Alliance, her bony wings made of countless, eerie white bone spurs spread open like a flower. The monstrous momentum brought forth by her bony wings pierced the air and lifted the dust.

At the same time, she recoiled, lowered her body, and prepared to pounce on the group.

The entrance of "Time Travel" was the boundary. Outside of the entrance was a bright sunny afternoon. The sunlight was so lovely and warm that even the dust twinkled and danced around. Meanwhile, inside the entrance, where Lin Sanjiu claimed as her territory, was filled with an impenetrable chilly umbra.

From this dark corner, Lin Sanjiu's amber eyes gleamed.

She noticed that a blonde haired woman who had a striking resemblance to somebody in her memory was among the group of five. Lin Sanjiu searched her memories and found out that she was the Growth type that got caught by Santa Claus from Mokugyo Encyclopedic Forum with her.

It was no surprise to Lin Sanjiu that the man who called himself Aker could recognize her in one glance if that woman was his companion.

"You guys are such slowpokes," Lin Sanjiu sneered. She had gone through a couple of battles, so her face was covered with dirt and blood. When she smiled, her teeth appeared peculiarly white, "I was running out of patience waiting for you all. I bet Puppeteer is the same, am I right?"

Aker was a young man with a lanky build and distinctive cheekbone. His body was shrouded entirely in a long beige cloak so that only the tips of his shoes were exposed. Facing Lin Sanjiu, who appeared ready to devour him, he stepped back and forced a

bitter smile on his face. He said softly, "Miss Lin, I think there is some misunderstanding between you and us. We mean no harm to you."

Lin Sanjiu was unfazed. She stared fixedly into his light-colored irises and pointed at the blond haired woman. The corner of her lips curled into a mocking grin, but her voice was calm as usual, "When you guys heard about my location from that woman, you all forfeited your previous routes to come after me. Isn't it obvious enough? If you all mean no harm to me, then enlighten me as to your reasons for coming all the way here to find me."

Stretching his pale hand from the cloak, Aker tidied his curly yet shiny hair. Then, he said slowly, "It is a rather long story."

He exchanged glances with the blonde haired woman before turning to Lin Sanjiu and smiled meekly, "I've heard the story from Miss Livia. I know that you all were forced to enter this pocket dimension because Santa Claus placed you under his control. Then, for some reason, Santa Claus assumed that we, the Progressor Alliance, colluded with Puppeteer, so as soon as we heard or got your location, we planned to hand you over to Puppeteer. Am I right?"

Lin Sanjiu narrowed her eyes, but she did not say anything.

Aker sighed and retracted his hand into his cloak. As if a fish jumped into a pool of water, his cloak fluttered for a moment before returning to calmness, "We are all in the same boat, Miss Lin. The only thing different is Santa Claus brought you in while most of us are thrown into this pocket dimension by Puppeteer."

"Puppeteer? How can he force so many of you to enter this pocket dimension at the same time?"

Lin Sanjiu's question made Aker's face turn sour. This made him look like a middle-aged man who was crushed by the burden of life rather than the young man he actually was.

"To be honest, we, the Progressor Alliance, are the weakest in the Twelve Worlds Centrum," he gave her a rueful grin before continuing his story, "Initially, we did not know about this pocket dimension given how small our alliance is. It's Puppeteer. After he learned about the existence of this pocket dimension and that this pocket dimension rewards the winner handsomely, he wanted to come here and have a look... Before I continue, can I assume that you already know only Growth type Posthumans can thrive in this Starry Carnival Amusement Park?"

Lin Sanjiu nodded.

"That's right. It's an original pocket dimension that works specifically for Growth type Posthumans. How can anyone resist the temptation of the reward given out by this kind of pocket dimension? Even though Puppeteer himself is a Growth type, but the Starry Carnival Amusement Park is too large for him since he only has himself. Also, not to forget that there are other groups of forces that harbor the same interest as him in this pocket dimension. Given these circumstances, he knew that it was impossible for him to get ahead of everyone to finish all the attractions in the Starry Carnival Amusement and claim the reward. Hence, he targeted us, the Progressor Alliance which is made up of only Growth type Posthumans."

When Aker reached this point, aside from Livia, the other three people who also came from the Progressor Alliance, had a forlorn expression on their face.

"Our branch at Red Nautilus had only a few members to begin with. When Puppeteer began to make a ruckus at the Progressor Alliance by throwing our people into this pocket dimension, many of our members escaped the Twelve Worlds Centrum. Combining those that unwittingly came to Red Nautilus and the rest of us, the Progressor Alliance now has not more than twenty members."

Lin Sanjiu began to believe in Aker. She straightened her body and slowly resettled her bony wings, "How did he force you all to

enter here?"

Upon hearing Lin Sanjiu's question, Aker flashed her another bitter smile. Then, he nodded to his companion, and a black bob-haired young lady stepped forward. She undid a few buttons on the bottom half of her shirt, lifted it, and revealed a patch of what should be human skin, but the patch that covered her lower abdomen was not something people called skin. It was instead a piece of cold, harsh, inanimate plastic-like material. This kind of material reminded Lin Sanjiu of the mannequin she bumped into during her time at Hyperthermal Hell.

"As you can see," the bob-haired girl looked at her abdomen and made a self-deprecating comment, "Puppeteer can not only turn a doll into a human, but he can do it the other way round as well."

Perhaps she felt awkward being stared by somebody not acquainted with her, so the girl quickly put down her shirt. She shook her head and the self-mocking expression left her face, reverting her face to her usual deadpan expression.

"This is only the beginning," Aker said, and all at once he sounded bitter, "If we do not make it quick work and get the final reward for him, this plastic will slowly spread from the infected area to the rest of our bodies. It won't stop until we eventually become lifeless dolls."

"How is that possible?" Lin Sanjiu face went pale from the shocking news. She quickly asked, "Where are Rena and Reno? Were they infected?"

"Rena and Reno?" Aker frowned as he searched his memory. Suddenly, he lifted his head and said, "You means Rena and Reno, the twins?"

Lin Sanjiu's heart, at this moment, raced so fast that it almost jumped out from her throat.

However, the next sentence Aker said was not in the smallest

degree helpful for her to get the whereabouts of Rena and Reno.

"Before this, I didn't understand why Puppeteer is so obsessed with them. Now, I finally understand. It's probably because of the relationship between you and those two kids. When they returned to our base at Red Nautilus, they kept bugging me that they wanted to go to Seagral Square to welcome a guest. Since it was not a big deal, and I was pretty occupied dealing with the ambush of Puppeteer, I just let them go. I never thought my permission would be the one-way-ticket to send them directly to Puppeteer. From what I heard from my subordinates, Puppeteer personally went to kidnap them."

Lin Sanjiu let out a heavy breath as her expression turned severe.

She had lost the only lead to Rena and Reno. It seemed to her that she had no other choice but to get them back directly from Puppeteer.

She was not afraid of confronting Puppeteer. What made her fear the most was that Rena and Reno had been off the radar for such a long time, what if Puppeteer had lost his patience and turned both of them into dolls?

As Lin Sanjiu was immersed in her thoughts, Aker measured her meticulously.

After a short while, he cleared his throat. As Lin Sanjiu lifted her head, he quickly flashed her a smile, "Miss Lin, I think you should shift some of your attention away from those two kids to yourself. The kids pose no threat to Puppeteer, and I'm sure they are still safe for the time being. While for you, your case is kind of complicated."

"Oh?" Lin Sanjiu raised her brows, "What makes you say so?"

"Because tomorrow is the 26th," Aker spoke as soft as he could, "Miss Livia has told me everything about Santa Claus... Have you forgotten?"

Lin Sanjiu was stunned. She had forgotten the thing Santa Claus had said!

Before entering the amusement park, Santa Claus told them to return to him on the 26th to receive their present, which was their own life. After she met Hei Zeji, she had placed all her mind and heart into honing her combat skill. She did not realize that the date had almost arrived.

"Thanks for reminding me, I—"

Before Lin Sanjiu could finish her words, Aker, with downcast eyes and shaking head, chipped in, "Please calm down, Miss Lin. I brought it up because I want to tell you something."

From the way Aker talked, he seemed to be a heavyweight in the Progressor Alliance. When he talked, aside from Livia, the other three Growth type Posthumans just remained silent beside him, "This is the first time you and Miss Livia have been to the Twelve World Centrum, so you two might be clueless of the things that happen here. Even though Santa Claus has gone off the radar for quite a long time, I've heard about his ability. Anyway, no matter what happens, I suggest you don't go to see him tomorrow.

"The order that you all must return to him by the 26th to claim your lives is all a ruse, a smokescreen to cover up the Achilles heel of his ability. From what I know, his ability, [Make a Wish] can only last for a few days. I guess that on the 26th, his ability will lose its effect. He has to recast his ability on you all; so he told you all to return to him on the 26th to claim your prize so that he could reapply his ability. Hence, Miss Lin, if you don't go meet him tomorrow, and you'll be free from his control."

Aker had pale skin, but his lips were bright red. After he finished talking in one go, a few freckles on his cheekbones became slightly red.

Every evolved ability had flaws in a way. Even a powerful entity like Santa Claus could not escape getting restricted by this

commandment. There was indeed some truthness in Aker's words, but...

After a long while, Lin Sanjiu's voice that was bereft of any temperature reverberated in the group's ears, "Are you asking me to risk my life for somebody that I first time meet?"

"Yes, I understand it is hard for you to trust me..." The long-faced young man that clad in long cloak sighed, "It's fine if you don't believe me. The worst case is that Santa Claus casts his ability on you again, and you only have to endure it for a few more days. However, please bear in your mind that everytime Santa Claus casts his ability, he can request you to do one thing for him. Hence, if you get controlled by him again, I'm not sure what he will ask you to do this time. This is why I said your case is complicated."

Lin Sanjiu bit her lower lip because she lost her direction. She had no idea who she should believe: Aker of the Progressor Alliance who looked quite dependable or that weird-acting Santa Claus who was the very epitome of fear. Suddenly, a question came out from her mind.

She took a deep breath, chased away all the problems in her mind and stared at Aker, "Tell me your intent. What do you want from me?"

She wasn't dumb.

If what Aker said was true, he could have ignored Lin Sanjiu when he got her coordinates because Puppeteer only wanted them to clear the Starry Carnival Amusement Park as fast as they could and get the reward for him. Besides, Puppeteer did not know she was in this pocket dimension as well, so what Aker was doing now was pointless. Since he came all the way for her and gave her such valuable intel, Lin Sanjiu knew very well that he had his own motive.

Aker was unsurprised. He seemed to foresee Lin Sanjiu would throw at him this question.

"It's not that I want something from you... Actually, I have a plan that could kill two birds with one stone. Both of us would benefit if we succeed; however, I need your cooperation, Miss Lin."

"Go on."

"From what I heard from Santa Claus, he is trying to cause some trouble for Puppeteer, so why don't we go with the flow and offer him an opportunity to meet Puppeteer?" Aker had done his homework well before he came to Lin Sanjiu. Lin Sanjiu was amazed by how well he understood the whole story, "If Santa Claus does not see you all tomorrow, he will become very edgy. This is because, after the 26th, he won't be able to control you all anymore. Miss Lin, may I ask if Santa Claus has given you a small item?"

Lin Sanjiu took out the green Santa hat magnet in her pocket and nodded hesitantly.

" Seems like that woman trusted Progressor Alliance a lot. She told them everything that happened outside... "

Aker took the green Santa hat magnet and examined it meticulously.

"Although I don't know what this magnet does, I presume that this is a kind of tracking device that can bring Santa Claus to you as long as you carry this item everywhere you go," Aker then returned the magnet to Lin Sanjiu and slowly told Lin Sanjiu his plan, "With this, he can enter this park whenever he wants, so what we have to do now is find a location and hide the magnet there. Then, we will lure Puppeteer to that location by giving him some false news... When Santa Claus comes for you, then they will bump into each other."

Offering Lin Sanjiu a confident smile, Aker extended his hand under his cloak and made a gesture to her, "No matter who wins the fight, we will be the ones there to pick up the pieces. What is your opinion of this plan, Miss Lin?"

Chapter 347: You Can't See Me

The cat doctor turned back and asked Soulsqn, "I wonder: were all Souls naturally born without brains?"

Despite his smooth action, and calm and polite tone, Soulsqn still felt that his question was far more lethal than Lin Sanjiu's swearing.

Even though she was the queen of a species, she did not feel offended. It was just that her brain went offline the moment the cat doctor asked her the question. Her mind stayed blank for a considerable amount of time, and when her brain finally reconnected, she stammered, "T-this item is too hard to use..."

"Is hiding under a costume difficult for you guys?" The cat doctor asked again with his gentle voice. Although he spoke in a respectful manner, he could not hide the derision in his tone, "If you guys cannot fit into the costume with your human suits on, can't you guys just take them off?"

If somebody walked on "Grizzly's Route," they would bump into a giant, wriggly, lumpy, green worm with human legs somewhere along the route. The green worm couldn't move very well. As it struggled to push itself forward, its eyes that were stitched above its head met a pole.

"We failed again!"

Meowie Hu shot up from the green worm costume. His snow-white eyebrows and whiskers stood on their ends, and his two emerald eyes blew fire. He disregarded the notice board beside him and yelled at the Souls, "Useless! You guys can't even wear a costume properly! If you guys can't do it, I will leave you all behind and continue this route on my own!"

Exchanging glances, the Souls looked at each other and wanted to say something, but none of them could think of words to defend

themselves. Ever since Meowie Hu took out the Special Item known as [I'm Not A Target], this was the third time they ran into the notice board.

As bad as the Soulsqn wanted to say something, nothing came out when she opened her mouth. She darted a glance at the notice board and when she found herself again looking at the same welcoming quote, "Welcome player No.58, No.62, No.63, No.64..." and their pictures, the words that stuck in her throat finally escaped her mouth, "Doctor, this costume is too small for ten of us to fit in."

Meowie Hu sneered. He moved forward and slapped the large green worm. Then, the costume instantly shrunk to the size of a handkerchief. Stepping on it, he said, "See? This was its original size. I have already enlarged it large enough for you guys. Now, think. Use the pathetically tiny brains of yours to think of a way to squeeze inside."

[I'm Not A Target]

No matter if you were a sadist or a high-tiered Posthuman that could topple a mountain with ease, nobody would attack a rock, a tree, or an ant. A dingo had once thought about this, "If I became a non-eye-catching object, then nobody will notice me, and I'll be safe!" Then, this special costume was born.

Effect: It could transform the appearance, body stature of any lifeform into an inconspicuous object such that people would think they were an ant, a heap of dust, or something else.

However, it should be noted that once a person successfully squeezed into the costume, your speed would drop drastically because there was no way a stone could walk thousands of miles a day, right? You lost all your attacking ability, and you would not be able to protect yourself from any incoming attack. At the same time, all Special Items would be temporarily unavailable when the costume was in use. Getting out of the costume was an onerous and

time-consuming task, and there was a mandatory five minutes separation time applied, so you had to make sure that you stayed as invisible as possible to avoid being noticed by others!

Given the circumstance, once the cat doctor and his troop got noticed, a new notice board—the one Lin Sanjiu and Soulsqn had bumped into when they first entered the Starry Carnival Amusement Park— appeared right in front of them.

After the Souls mulled over the pros and cons of Meowie Hu's suggestion, all of them finally compelled and faced the reality. If they wanted to proceed, they had to remove their human suits; otherwise, they could not fit into the costume.

Removing their human suits meant that they had to expose their vulnerable core until they found themselves suitable human suits. It was also not an easy task to find a suitable human suit. As such, the Souls couldn't be blamed for not being willing to remove their human suits.

The Souls had attained corporal bodies, so even after they removed their human suits, they needed time to return to their normal size. Under the cat doctor's curious gaze, the Souls waited in the wind for quite some time before they finally shrunk to their normal size and kept by AYU into her body.

"Hoho, what a bunch of interesting creatures," the cat doctor laughed as he was no longer angry. After he rubbed his paw—the one he used to touch one of the Souls—on the ground until it was clean, he then said with a satisfied tone, " There are only you two left, guess it should be easier now?"

Looking at the pile of human suits, a kind of emotion known as heartache flashed across Soulsqn and AYU's faces. Nevertheless, they did not say anything.

Both of them then obediently crawled into the costume. This time, two people and one cat successfully fit into the green worm costume. After they adjusted themselves to look more like a worm,

they then prowled into the bushes.

When the "green worm" raised its head, the notice board that had been blocking the road was no longer there.

They were at the entrance of "Grizzly's Route" which was not far from the main entrance. When they looked back, they could easily see the tall, castle-shaped entrance arch right behind them. As the green worm slithered into the inner part of the amusement park, another group of people ran all the way from another route and stopped at the castle-shaped entrance arch.

"Let's hide there," the Livia, who was skinny with a head of blonde hair, suggested nonchalantly to Lin Sanjiu.

Whenever she opened her mouth, there were two deep nasolabial folds on either side of her lips and made her look much older than her actual age. In this apocalyptic world, those who struggled usually looked much older than their actual age. Somebody like Lin Sanjiu, who was lucky enough to have her genes reformed, was one in a million.

"There?"

Lin Sanjiu raised her head and peered at the tall castle-shaped entrance arch. She found that the arch looked very realistic. It gave off the impression of being a real wall when you stood by it, and a patch of green, flourishing ivy could be seen hanging all the way from the top of the wall to the ground, covering half of the wall.

"There. I don't know what it is called, but the place where the archer is should be a great hiding spot," Livia pointed to the spot she mentioned to Lin Sanjiu and nodded to the Growth type that followed them.

She grabbed the ivy, and after confirming that it could withstand the weight of three adults, she climbed up to the wall. Lin Sanjiu and another Growth type known as Zagger followed suit.

The meeting between Aker and her was yesterday's thing.

Even though Lin Sanjiu had reviewed Aker's plan for a night, she still could not bring herself to trust him. She decided to come over here and see how things go before making a decision.

According to Aker, Santa Claus had cheated them. The sole reason Santa Claus asked them out was to reapply his [Make a Wish] ability. She couldn't tell whether Aker was lying or not. Fortunately, apart from the deceased Yidong and her, she remembered that there was still another male Growth type that had entered the amusement park at the same time with them. Despite the fact that she had lost track of him after they entered the amusement park, she was confident that the youngster would show himself today at the rocky shore. If nothing unexpected happened, he would go outside the amusement park to meet Santa Claus.

As such, following that Growth type was the best way to find out the veracity of Aker's words. After making up her mind, she gave Aker an excuse which she could not remember about why she wanted to come over here. Seeing how firm she was, Aker had no other choice but ordered a Growth type to follow Livia and her.

After three of them waited under the sun for almost an hour, a figure finally showed himself on "Grizzly's Route."

The person walked with a heavy gait. Under Lin Sanjiu's anxious gaze, he trudged along the route and took a considerable amount of time approaching the entrance. Even though she did not know his name, judging from his visage, hairstyle, and cloth, Lin Sanjiu could confirm that he was the fourth Growth type that was thrown by Santa Claus with her into the amusement park.

As the youngster stepped into the entrance, he disappeared before reemerging from the other side of the entrance after a short while.

Nobody was at the rocky shore, and the surrounding was quiet.

There were no fish, no birds, no humans, no wind, no sound, and no Santa Claus.

Looking at the deserted rocky shore, the youngster became restless. He paced back and forth on the shore before coming to an abrupt stop. His expression was blank as he stared vacantly into the sea in front of him.

Just as Lin Sanjiu thought Santa Claus was not going to show up, a gust suddenly formed on the offing. The surface of the ocean burst opened, spraying water high into the sky. Then, a golden snow sleigh came in between the white foam and fell heavily on the rocky shore.

A green giant could be seen squeezing his humongous body in front of the sleigh. When Lin Sanjiu's gaze fell on Santa Claus, she held her breath.

Under the hypersensory state, Lin Sanjiu caught her two companions hold their breath at the same time as her. She knew very well why they did that. After all, Santa Claus was mysterious. None of them could guess what kind of ability he had. If they were given the opportunity, Livia and Zagger might have even lowered their body temperatures.

They couldn't do that, but Lin Sanjiu could. Her control over her body had reached a new level. Under her command, the blood in her body slowed down. Soon after, her face turned ashen white as if she'd stayed outside in the winter for too long. Her body became much colder as well.

Perhaps God had seen their effort. When Santa Claus climbed out from his sleigh and surveyed the surrounding, he did not realize that there were three people hiding on top of the castle-shaped entrance arch.

"Where is the other?"

The thick yet shrieky sound of that Santa Claus resonated on the

rocky shore. The male Growth type walked near Santa Claus and was saying something, but Lin Sanjiu couldn't hear it. Santa Claus quickly turned his body around and crooked his head while examining the young man.

Whenever Santa Claus made such an action, his head that hidden behind his fluffy beard would look like it was going to fall. It was indeed an intriguing sight.

"What are they talking?" Livia whispered, "I can't hear a thing. Can you?"

Lin Sanjiu pursed her lips and did not reply to Livia's question. They were too far away from them; she could barely hear anything from their conversation. All she knew was that the voice of Santa Claus had become very sweet, as if it had been dipped in honey. He even toned down his voice.

The male Growth type shook his head profusely and stepped back a few paces. From his back, she could see that he was very nervous.

As tall and plump Santa Claus pressed forward, his large beard trembled. He was laughing.

After which, the male Growth type spun around, and he ran. He fled down any path he could without heeding which he chose. He was so fast that he turned into a blur, and in a split of a second, he had entered the amusement park. On the other hand, Santa Claus did not move. He remained in his original spot and watched the male Growth type.

Just as the male Growth type entered "Grizzly's Route" and almost disappeared from their gaze, Santa Claus finally moved.

At that moment, Lin Sanjiu could see nothing but a streak of a green shadow. Santa Claus's speed was too fast. He had reached supersonic and seemed to have breached the physical barrier of space. In a flash so quick it made Lin Sanjiu's heart stop beating for a moment, Santa Claus was beside the male Growth type. When

her heart resumed its fluttered rhythm, the head of that male Growth type had flown away.

Lin Sanjiu shuddered. She couldn't understand what she was feeling right now. She was scared, but at the same time, she felt relieved. If Santa Claus's wishing ability was still in effect, why would he change his way of punishment?

Livia could not hold her excitement and exclaimed, "That's great!"

"Seemed like Aker was telling the truth," Lin Sanjiu heaved a sigh of relief inwardly, but she did not tear her eyes away from Santa Claus. She knew they weren't safe yet. At least, not for long.

In order to kill his target, Santa Claus had charged into the amusement park. He was standing beside the headless corpse, carefully surveying his surroundings. After all, this was a pocket dimension designed specifically for Growth type, and as a non-growth type like him, he knew he would never survive well there. As such, he was extra careful with his steps. Just as he slowly moved towards the "Grizzly's Route" and almost disappeared from Lin Sanjiu's sight, he stopped.

A notice board appeared in front of Santa Claus, blocking his way.

Lin Sanjiu was very familiar with the notice written on that notice board and when Santa Claus lowered his body to study the notice board, a bad foreboding feeling suddenly rose in Lin Sanjiu's heart.

She seemed to have forgotten something.

"Players! Players!" Just as the moment her brain was alarming her of the incoming threat, a roar that sounded like a cannon burst forth from afar. She could feel the anger in his voice. "You Growth type! Well, very well! Just you wait there!"

Lin Sanjiu's hairs stood on their ends. She suddenly realized she

had neglected something.

In the next second, she withdrew the green Santa magnet from her pocket as fast as she could. Then, she yanked her arm and threw it towards the direction of the rocky shore.

At the same time, Santa Claus, who had been standing far from them disappeared. He turned into a streak of green light and reappear in the air above the green Santa magnet.

"Run!"

Lin Sanjiu yelled at her two companions who were still in a daze. Without wasting a second, she turned around and darted forward.

The green Santa hat magnet appeared in the middle of the air and fell on the vacant rocky shore. Before Santa Claus landed, he knew they had deceived him. His eyes went bloodshot, and his ear-splitting roar wafted far from outside of the entrance into their ears.

Lin Sanjiu's heart almost jumped out from her throat. Her mind was all jumbled, hence she could not enter the hypersensory state. She had put all of her concentration on her feet and run as fast as she could. She knew she wasn't safe until she entered any of the attractions.

Her lungs were running out of oxygen fast. As Lin Sanjiu threw herself into the Frog Route, and before she entered the Bumper Kart attraction, she looked over to her shoulders.

When the large hand belonging to Santa Claus almost touched Lin Sanjiu's back, she curled her body and leaped into the rink.

In the meantime, a green worm was serenely walking on Grizzly's Route.

The amusement park had regarded this green worm as a mindless lifeform. As such, they did not encounter any attractions along the route. The cat doctor was getting bored.

"This world is so populated with different kind of lifeforms. I have never been to a world that has as many lifeforms as this world," seeing that the cat doctor had said something, Soulsqn, who had been crawling behind him chimed in, "Both you and that guy that passed by us just now never existed before."

"What did you say?" The cat doctor's ears flicked. He tilted his head and recalled his memories. There indeed was a male Posthuman that had gone by. That man saw them, but since they were clad in the green worm costume, he just regarded them as a gigantic worm and walked away. However, no matter how the cat doctor thought, that man just looked like an ordinary Posthuman.

"Please allow me to explain my words, doctor," Soulsqn seemed to be delighted that she finally found something the cat doctor did not know. She whispered to him, "I have seen that kind of creature before. He seemed to be human that has turned into a doll through some unknown way. We cannot absorb that creature..."

Chapter 348: No Matter What Happens, We Won't Meet

Lin Sanjiu leaned forward and drew in a few big gulps of air. She only noticed the radiating pain from all over her body when she stopped running. To escape from Santa Claus, she pushed herself to an incredible speed in a split second. Now that she had stopped, she could still feel the spasms from her legs and abdominal muscle.

Even though she had a ten-seconds headstart, Santa Claus nearly caught up with her...

While they were running away, Lin Sanjiu was separated from Livia and Zagger so she didn't know which route they had taken and whether they were even alive. As she heard her own punctuated hissing breaths, she straightened her back. Her eyes drifted past the bumper kart rink and toward the entrance of the arena.

Santa Claus, in his full suit of green, stood directly at the entrance of the arena. The entrance doors cast an ominous shadow over him. Amidst that gray-green shadow, two white eyes were glaring at Lin Sanjiu. The door frame of the entrance only reached the top of the man's eyebrows. As his eyes pierced through the shadows, it created a disturbing impression as if they were about to fall from his eye sockets.

Facing Santa Claus' threatening presence, Lin Sanjiu stared back at him without any attempts to avoid his gaze. She raised one corner of her lips. She smirked at Santa Claus as she got into the nearest bumper kart.

Santa Claus immediately narrowed his eyes. He took a step forward almost as if he had the intention to enter the arena. Just as Lin Sanjiu's chest tightened, he stopped the next instant.

The two of them glared at each other for a few seconds, stuck in a

deadlock. When the old woman in the F1 uniform pressed the bell to start the first round, Santa Claus finally let out a sinister chuckle. He turned away and disappeared from the entrance.

Lin Sanjiu let out a huge sigh of relief as she collapsed into the bumper kart seat. Her previous confidence—looking as if she had a trump card—was all an act. When Santa Claus turned around, her heart nearly froze for a second.

Even though Starry Carnival Amusement Park was supposedly designed for Growth-types, the rules in this amusement park were too vague and ambiguous. It was clear that the difficulty for each game station would be adjusted to the capabilities of the stronger player if two Growth-type posthumans joined. However, what would happen if Santa Claus actually joined? Would the difficulty be determined by the Growth-type posthuman or the person with the higher combat capabilities?

If it was the latter, Lin Sanjiu would have been in deep trouble.

If Santa Claus really wanted to challenge the difficulty of the game stations in Starry Carnival Amusement Park, he would definitely die without a doubt. However, he certainly could drag Lin Sanjiu down to the grave with him without any hassle. After all, the difference between their capabilities was an undeniable fact.

Lin Sanjiu actually lucked out as Santa Claus refrained from joining as he did not understand the situation and decided not to take unnecessary risks...

Lin Sanjiu could only pray inwardly that Aker's words were true. Especially that part where Santa Claus' ability would only last till today. Hopefully, that was the reason why she was still alive now. If she really had to collect her "present" today, Lin Sanjiu would be no different from a dead person. After all, there was no way Santa Claus would give her that "present" now.

As she had played Bumper Karts quite a few times, it wasn't

difficult. On top of that, without Hei Zeji watching, she felt less pressured. As Lin Sanjiu swerved her vehicle to avoid another bumper kart, she couldn't help thinking of a problem.

The green Santa hat magnet was most likely a Special Item that would "attract" Santa Claus to its location. According to Santa Claus' plan, he probably wanted to bypass all the stations and reach Lin Sanjiu's location directly...

After Lin Sanjiu finished the first round, she mumbled to herself as she organized her thoughts. "If I were Santa Claus, I wouldn't give up after going through so much trouble. If that is the case... I would retrieve the magnet and just wait at the entrance of the amusement park so that I could get another Growth-type and have him bring that magnet in..."

In any case, after ensuring that Santa Claus' ability no longer affected her, none of these matters would concern Lin Sanjiu. She didn't even want to be involved in Aker's plan. She just wanted to find Puppeteer before those people and get the whereabouts of Reno and Rena. After that, she would leave this Starry Carnival Amusement Park pocket dimension.

"As for Aker, Puppeteer, and Santa Claus... They can go ahead and fight among themselves. Hei Zeji is probably the only person that treats this place as heaven because he can train here and get sweet treats."

After Lin Sanjiu's combat capabilities had improved, the three rounds were also harder. However, after completing "Hei Zeji's" version of the game, it didn't take her much effort to complete all three rounds again.

"Congratulations, you have received 46 Stamina points," the old woman looked at Lin Sanjiu lazily as she added 20 bonus Stamina points for completing the station, "Do you want to choose a different route?"

Lin Sanjiu hesitated. She felt a little curious. "What other routes

can I choose?"

"You can choose any of the 11 routes in the amusement park," the "eternally disinterested" old woman answer with a yawn. "However, you can only move to the section of the route between the first and the second station."

The remaining 11 routes were named after either an animal or a cartoon character. Lin Sanjiu had no idea how they differed from each other based on their names.

"I'll just randomly pick one, " she thought to herself, feeling a bit hesitant. She had met Aker on Frog Route. Now that she had dumped the magnet, she had nothing to do with Santa Claus. Considering these two points, the best course of action was to choose to avoid both of them. "I will go for Grizzly's Route, no, forget it. I will go to Swan Route."

"The Growth-type posthuman that was decapitated by Santa Claus came out from Grizzly's Route." Lin Sanjiu remembered. That also meant that that person had helped her rule out Grizzly's Route...

"Okay, you will be switched to Swan Route." The old woman repeated drearily. She operated something and the walls at the back of the arena slowly opened. As the wall rumbled, sunlight flooded in. The path that was revealed had a very different style. She could hear the sound of tinkling music. The path was laid with white rectangular bricks that stretched to the end of her field of vision.

No matter how many pocket dimensions she had been in, she found them very mysterious.

The scent wafting around Swan Route was also different from Frog Route. There was the sweet fragrant of cakes and the delicious smell of barbeque hotdog. Even after walking for a while, Lin Sanjiu still had no idea where the stalls selling these two kinds of food were. Unlike Frog Route, there were quite a few

bookstores, grocery stores, and cosmetic shops. Lin Sanjiu couldn't figure out why these stores were there in the first place.

Even after walking for five minutes on Swan Route, Lin Sanjiu did not see the next station. After fighting for two days, she had accumulated quite a number of injuries. With adrenaline coursing through her body during those fights, she didn't notice the pain. Now that things had settled down, her every step felt labored.

"Huh?" Lin Sanjiu remarked when she saw the perfect shop that she needed after she consoled herself many times inwardly. "This is a 'treat-only-symptoms' pharmacy?"

There was a pharmacy behind a roasted maize stall. It had a minimalist blue-white design. The store's door was directly behind the stall and it had a large blue cross. Lin Sanjiu couldn't decide if the blue cross or the name of the store was more eye-catching.

"Who came up with this name?" Lin Sanjiu muttered as she opened the door skeptically. "How does it get business?"

Ironically, the store did get Lin Sanjiu as a customer.

The pharmacy was clean and orderly, with the items on the shelves neatly arranged, yet it did not seem to have anyone around.

"Welcome! Are you feeling unwell? What sort of medicine are you looking for?" A warm greeting rang from the corner of the pharmacy.

Lin Sanjiu did not sense that person even in her hypersensory state. A nimble plump man wearing a white coat stood up suddenly from behind a counter. The air current in her surroundings did not change even one bit as the man smiled at Lin Sanjiu and nodded his head.

"He isn't a human." Lin Sanjiu thought to herself. Anyway, this wasn't the first non-human entity she had met.

"Yes, I am hurting all over," Lin Sanjiu replied casually while she

scanned the counter near her. The things around her looked unusual as well. There saw some medicine with names like "Awe-Inspiring Pill", "Kidney Boosting Capsule" and others, and they didn't seem cheap.

"Are you a doctor?" Lin Sanjiu asked.

When the plump man heard her question, he sighed and replied with a long-winded answer. "Oh, I really need a doctor right now! It is difficult to hire a doctor in this lousy place. There is a doctor on Grizzly's Route, but I suddenly lost track of him..."

While Lin Sanjiu thought about her own wounds, she walked over to the shelves selling topical creams. She wasn't really paying attention to the man's words. However, when she reached for the bottle of "Bone Growth Ointment" she suddenly stopped.

"Did you say that there is a doctor on Grizzly's Route?"

"Yes," the plump man answered as his eyes drifted to the Bone Growth Ointment. He quickly forgot what he was saying and grinned at her, "Oh! That's really effective! Do you have any broken bones now? Where? Your rib bones? Oh, then you must have injured your organs as well. I am not boasting here. You can feel your bones growing ten minutes after you rub that ointment..."

"Of course, things sold in a pocket dimension can't be any normal medicine," Lin Sanjiu thought to herself. When she realized that the item she was holding was a Special Item, she realized a shocking fact.

"Is that doctor... a player?"

"Ah, of course. We have only that many staff in our amusement park, we don't have any doctors around— But, I think the doctor left. He isn't in the amusement park now. In my opinion, you don't need a doctor," the plump man did not give up on promoting his product. He brought a small shopping basket for Lin Sanjiu and

added, "We have a 10% discount on all items as we just opened. I will only charge you 41 Stamina points for the Bone Growth Ointment! It's not expensive, right?"

There were no price tags in the store yet the price that the plump store owner quoted left her with only sufficient Stamina points for one game station. Lin Sanjiu held the [Bone Growth Ointment] and watched the man with narrowed eyes. She didn't move.

There were many people in the Twelve Worlds Centrum so it wasn't that strange that a doctor would appear on the island. Lin Sanjiu didn't care about that comment, she was more interested in the information that the man unwittingly revealed.

"Oh my, 40 Stamina points is a little too expensive," Lin Sanjiu gasped, pretending she was shocked by the price. "I wanted to buy one BBQ hotdog to eat... As you know, since I have these wounds, it isn't good for me to go hungry."

The plump man stared at Lin Sanjiu, dumbfounded. He looked at her then at the medicine. He found himself in a rather difficult position. "Our prices aren't negotiable... That is the lowest price.."

"Oh, I'm not saying that I won't buy."

The woman dangled the [Bone Growth Ointment] in her hand but she did not put it into the basket. "Mr. Shopkeeper, I will buy your medicine but I feel that it isn't really worth 41 Stamina points. Why don't you give me a freebie?"

"A freebie?" Ever since his shop opened, this was the first time that he had met someone that would try to bargain with a character in a pocket dimension, so he had a slightly stunned expression.

"You mentioned that one of the players on Grizzly's Route is a doctor and that you lost track of his whereabouts..." Lin Sanjiu flashed a smile at him. "In other words, even though you are not in the same area, you can track the status and position of that player

in the amusement park, right?"

The smile on the plump man's face melted away like ice. He pursed his lips and stared at Lin Sanjiu without saying a word. Lin Sanjiu treated the man's reaction as a silent admittance. Her grin grew a little wider.

"If you can track that player, we can logically assume that you can also track other players, right? Don't try to tell me that you can only detect doctors. I won't believe you."

Under Lin Sanjiu's watchful gaze, the man remained silent for a moment before suddenly letting his shoulders drop. "Alright, which player do you want to get information on? However, you must buy the medicine before I tell you."

Lin Sanjiu's heart raced. She made the right guess!

Apparently, information about Starry Carnival Amusement Park was not only limited to the few rules on the noticeboards, but they were scattered around for the players to discover...

According to the plump man's request, Lin Sanjiu bought the [Bone Growth Ointment] without even batting an eye. After that, she thought for a while before she formulated her question. "I haven't seen that person for a few years. I am not sure what he looks like now. However, he is called Puppeteer. He is a man who is about this tall... Do you know where he is right now?"

After she tried her best to describe Puppeteer's appearance, the plump store owner nodded calmly. "Yes, I do."

Chapter 349: Lin Sanjiu Joins a Group of Delinquents

"The entrance fee is 5 stamina points, thank you," the young woman behind a glass ticket booth announced as Lin Sanjiu approached her. The woman had a ponytail and a somewhat angular lower jaw. After completing two game stations, this was the first time Lin Sanjiu saw a proper "ticket booth staff". The young woman appeared to be in her twenties and did not seem to have much interest in her job. She was wearing a uniform with words "Starry Carnival Amusement Park" and it seemed too tight for her broad shoulders.

As Lin Sanjiu did not respond, the woman prompted, "Do you want a ticket?"

Lin Sanjiu looked up and surveyed the nondescript building. This arena looked more like a newly-built warehouse. The walls of the building were built with sheets of galvanized steel which had been painted white. Under the red-tiled roof, there were rows of small windows (more like vents). The whole building, along with its ticket booth seller, looked very bland.

"I have a question," Lin Sanjiu raised her wrist undecidedly. "What sort of attraction is this?"

Unlike the past two game stations, there wasn't a single sign in this arena. If the building wasn't situated right in the middle of Swan Route blocking the way forward, Lin Sanjiu would have mistaken it for a warehouse.

After she was enlightened by her conversation with the pharmacy store owner, Lin Sanjiu started taking the initiative to strike up a conversation with any of the "amusement park staff" she met with hopes that she could pry more information from them.

"This is a sightseeing attraction," the young woman swept a device over her wrist, "This is the entrance. After you go out of the building exit, the first round would end. By the way, you only have 5 stamina points left."

Lin Sanjiu pulled her hand back as she watched with uncertainty the roller shutter of the building going up with a grinding sound. It revealed the floor of a darkened interior. Lin Sanjiu entered her hypersensory state and took a step forward.

Thanks to the bottle of [Bone Growth Ointment] she had bought from the pharmacy, her more serious wounds had already healed to some extent. Her broken bones were slowly mending. Additionally, her organs no longer felt queasy after any intense movements she made. She even applied some [Bone Growth Ointment] on her wings. The small part of her wings that had been broken off by Hei Zeji's attack was also recovering...

Facing this new station, Lin Sanjiu was definitely feeling a little more confident than she was several minutes ago.

However, Lin Sanjiu was most grateful for the information she had gotten doggedly from the plump store owner.

"I happen to know that person you are describing," the plump store owner kept his promise and was forthcoming with his answer after Lin Sanjiu bought the bottle of [Bone Growth Ointment]. "He had been traveling alone ever since he entered the amusement park. He rarely interacted with other players. Even then, these encounters were brief. The player came out from one of the stations this morning and switched to Pumpkin Route."

"Where is he exactly on Pumpkin Route?" Lin Sanjiu immediately pressed, "Which station is he at?"

"The number of stations on each route is different," the plump store owner provided her with a new piece of information. "Not counting the number of stations he had completed on the previous route, he is currently moving toward the fifth station on Pumpkin

Route."

Lin Sanjiu was a little stunned, "I thought the first person that reached the final pitstop could get a present? If there are more game stations on some routes, isn't that unfair?"

"If you are on a route with fewer stations, you will normally need to spend more time completing them," the plump store owner explained with a smile. He looked like he knew more but he changed the subject abruptly, "Besides, the player can also switch to a different route."

No matter how she looked at it, Puppeteer entered the amusement park a lot earlier than Lin Sanjiu. However, he was still at the fifth station. Evidently, he must have been hindered by something during his journey. This was good news for Lin Sanjiu.

Lin Sanjiu was two game stations behind Puppeteer so she knew she had to move faster to catch up with him...

After contemplating, she tried to ask the plump store owner a couple of other questions. However, she already expected his reaction. "There are still many other interesting facts about the amusement park," he surmised cryptically and did not provide Lin Sanjiu with any other useful information. He did not even know what the next station on the route was.

"Judging from the exterior of the warehouse-like building, the 'amusement park staff' probably weren't telling the truth when they claimed that they did not know anything about it. It is more likely that they are deliberately trying to make it more mysterious than it really is..." Lin Sanjiu grumbled inwardly as she walked into the space behind the roller shutter.

The shutter rolled down almost at the same moment she entered the building. It slammed down on the floor, closing the entrance. In an instant, Lin Sanjiu found herself in pitch black darkness. Under her hypersensory state, Lin Sanjiu could capture every signal from her hair and skin. She could feel even the slightest hint

of any suspicious movement. However, the air current around her was calm. She could not sense even a single undulation in the atmosphere. It was as though she was the only person in that building.

"Didn't the ticket seller say something about this being a sightseeing attraction..."

After Lin Sanjiu checked that the space in front of her was safe, she took one step forward.

Her surroundings suddenly reacted as if it had sensed her movement. Bzzt. With the sound of crackling electricity, a familiar white fluorescent light flickered for a few moments. Darkness ebbed away from the scene as if a piece of watercolor painting thrown into a bucket of water. The sudden brightness made Lin Sanjiu squint her eyes a little. This was quickly followed by a pungent stench of disinfectant.

After being sprayed by disinfectant for the umpteenth time, Lin Sanjiu caught a whiff of a faint stench that she seemed to recognize.

When she opened her eyes, she saw an empty corridor right in front of her.

The walls were painted in two tones, white and green. The green paint cut the wall horizontally at waist height. This particular two-tone paint style continued all the way to the end of the corridor. White fluorescent lights hung from the ceiling of the corridor. There was a dysfunctional light every few segments of the corridor. The dangling light tubes from these dysfunctional lights flickered persistently with making buzzing electricity sounds.

The carpeted wooden floorboards were so old that the edges of the wood were black. There were even parts of the floor where the floorboards were raised. Both sides of the corridor were lined with closed doors.

There was a gold-colored house number sign on each of the deep red wooden doors. They were numbered sequentially like "102" then "103". They seemed to be apartment unit numbers. Small dusty rugs were placed in front of some of the doors, whereas there were old shoes in front of some of the others. There were also doors with flower wreaths. This was clearly the corridor of some cheap apartment building.

Lin Sanjiu looked at her surroundings feeling a little perplexed. She searched the corridor using both her hypersensory state and [Higher Consciousness Scan] but it was almost as if she was the only person standing in the corridor.

"What is there to see in an old apartment building?" Lin Sanjiu grouched and continued walking along the corridor.

The ticket seller's explanation was very vague. Lin Sanjiu did not know how to exit the building. Since the roller shutter behind her had disappeared and was now just a plain wall, she could only continue on the corridor in front of her.

The corridor was so silent that a person might even start to have auditory hallucinations.

Even with Lin Sanjiu's deftness, every time she took a step, the floorboard would make a creaking sound. The sound was exceptionally loud due to the amplification as it traveled through the walls of the empty corridor. Even though Lin Sanjiu was very focused, she could not sense a single movement behind any of the doors. She quickly reached the end of the corridor. There was a wooden staircase at the end and it led to the second floor. When Lin Sanjiu climbed the stairs, they also creaked noisily.

The place didn't seem dangerous and, for now, Lin Sanjiu did not notice anything suspicious.

"Could this sightseeing attraction really just be for sightseeing?" Lin Sanjiu murmured to herself, confounded by the situation. She had checked both the corridors of the first and second floor

carefully. "This amusement park is a little whimsical so maybe that's it."

However, when Lin Sanjiu was on the last step of the stairs that led to the third floor, she froze. She finally heard some sounds.

The sound of noisy rock music came from one of the apartment units at the end of the corridor. It had a quick and heavy rhythm. The music was interrupted by roars of boisterous waves of laughter that seemed to be from a group of youngsters. When Lin Sanjiu walked closer, the sound grew louder. The raucous sounds of laughter, the noisy footsteps, and the indistinct human conversations rang out behind the door of that apartment unit. Evidently, those people in that apartment unit did not care much about neighbor etiquette.

Lin Sanjiu hesitated for a moment before she knocked on the door.

Since the attraction was designed in such a way that she was brought there, she decided to go along with the situation. Her first few knocks on the door were drowned out by the noise coming from the unit. After waiting for a while, no one answered. Lin Sanjiu knocked a little hard. Knock. Knock. The door even started shaking in its frame.

"Who's that? How annoying... Hey you, go and open the door!"

Lin Sanjiu finally heard a girl's voice yelling behind the door.

After she heard a few draggy footsteps. The brass handle rattled for a bit and the deep red wooden door was suddenly opened wide. White smoke instantly gushed out of the apartment unit. The smell of cigarette smoke, alcohol and a distinct odor of burnt weed assaulted Lin Sanjiu's nose.

"Who-who are you?" stuttered a teenage boy with light blond hair, that stared at Lin Sanjiu with reddish eyes. "You're looking for someone?"

At first glance, Lin Sanjiu knew that the teenager was younger than seventeen. He was definitely smoking cannabis just moments ago.

"I need some directions," Lin Sanjiu's cool-headed demeanor contrasted starkly with the gregarious group of youngsters behind the teenager. "Could you please tell me where is the exit of this apartment building?"

Lowering his eyelids, the teenager's lip slanted awkwardly due to the effects of the cannabis. "Ha Ha Ha! How can you get lost in an apartment building?" he laughed with a foolish-looking face.

"I can be told off by anyone but you..." Lin Sanjiu thought to herself.

Lin Sanjiu gave a quick sweeping glance at the room behind him. A few teenage boys and girls were lying limply on a sofa. All of them had drowsy faces and were rambling on about something. When that boy opened the door, the noise from the unit became much louder. Some of the other teenagers were dancing. Alcohol bottles, cigarette butts and empty food containers were strewn across the room. There were dirty spots all over the carpeted floor.

"As I was saying, the exit—" Before Lin Sanjiu could finish her sentence, the blond teenager suddenly shouted to his companions.

"Hey, you guys. Come and look at this. This person got lost in this building!" He suddenly burst out laughing and laughed so hard that he couldn't help bending forward.

"Is it really that funny?" However, Lin Sanjiu had seen such people before. Some people just started laughing at everything once they were high. She pursed her lips and couldn't help sighing inwardly.

"Let her in!" a girl hollered through the laughter. She sounded like the first person who commanded the blond teenager to open the door. She jumped onto the sofa with her pair of dirty Converse

sneakers. "Look! She's even wearing a movie prop! Come in! Come in! Let's drink together," the girl exclaimed with an excited expression.

Lin Sanjiu turned somber as she entered the room feeling very uneasy.

Once she entered the room, the smell of burnt cannabis odor was even stronger. Lin Sanjiu wrapped her [Defence Forcefield] around her nose and mouth to avoid being affected by the effects of the fumes. She did this very skillfully as she usually retained this level of self-protection beside Soulsqn.

The girl with the Converse sneakers had a few strands of purple hair. She jumped over to where Lin Sanjiu was standing and flashed a toothy wide grin at Lin Sanjiu.

"I just want to know where the exit is," Lin Sanjiu's hypersensory state seemed useless here. "I won't meddle with your affairs, once I get the location, I'll just go."

"Why are you in such a hurry?" The girl seemed amused by Lin Sanjiu so she pulled her to one side, "Since fate brought us together, why not sit down and have a bit of booze?"

A bespectacled teenager suddenly started strumming his guitar and singing without caring about the people around him.

"Ignore him. Why don't you tell me about yourself?" The girl handed Lin Sanjiu a glass of whiskey briskly. "Why are you carrying that thing?"

The whiskey glass was clouded by suspicious-looking stains. Lin Sanjiu held the glass tightly. She was still feeling very disoriented. Logically speaking, the exit should be on the first floor of the apartment building. To add to the confusion, these group of debauched youngsters were the only people she had seen since she came up from the first floor.

She could reasonably assume that this group of teenagers were

critical for her to complete the first round.

"Nobody said anything to you guys being like this..." After thinking about it for a while, Lin Sanjiu tried to get information from them in a roundabout way. "Where are the other residents of this building?"

"I don't know what they are doing but we can get anything we want in this building. Of course, we will just enjoy ourselves," the girl shrugged. When Lin Sanjiu looked away, the girl's eyes turned slowly in Lin Sanjiu's direction until they disappeared past the corner of her eyes. She flashed a wide grin and laughed, "Anyway, after we came here, we have never been able to find the way out."

Chapter 350: Please Don't Knock on a Stranger's Door

Drip. Drip. Drip.

The sound of dripping water was conspicuously loud in the empty washroom that Lin Sanjiu was in. The fluorescent light above her flickered now and then, thrusting the washroom into a limbo between light and dark. It was almost as if the whole washroom would turn dark suddenly.

Letting out an exhausted sigh, Lin Sanjiu turned open the tap covered in water spots. Right now, she really needed to refreshen herself by splashing some cold water on her face. However, after the tap squeaked twice, no water came out.

Lin Sanjiu looked up and scrutinized her own reflection. Under the flickering light, she could see her pale and pallid face. Her wings loomed behind her, partly hidden in the shadows.

"What will you do next?" Mrs. Manas quipped suddenly. She had not made an appearance for quite a while. Lin Sanjiu did not reply because she didn't know what to do.

—

A few minutes ago, she had searched the entire apartment building. She started from the first floor and examined every corner. She covered every single floor from the first to the seventh floor, which was also the top floor. The stairway stopped there, leaving her with an old rundown ceiling which blocked her from moving forward in an almost mocking manner.

It was as if the entire building was carved out from a single concrete slab. There wasn't even a single opening to the outside world, let alone an exit. Even though Lin Sanjiu could guess that using violence wasn't going to work, she tried hitting the wall at the end of one of the corridors anyway. Broken concrete pieces fell

off the wall once her fist connected as the wall wasn't that strong. However, no matter how many times she hit the wall and how much concrete debris fell, there was still a thick wall behind that dent she had created. It was as if the wall stretched out infinitely. When she walked downstairs to check the dent after a few minutes had passed, she realized that the dent had disappeared. The two-toned, white-green wall had returned to its original state.

"Where is Puppeteer now?" Lin Sanjiu couldn't help mulling over this matter every minute she was trapped in this building.

"We have already been trapped here for three years." Lin Sanjiu remembered those words as if the girl from the apartment unit was speaking just at her ear. She could even visualize the girl's smile in her head. "At the beginning, I tried to look for the exit. But, I have already gotten past that. Life is life no matter where we are, right? I won't have to change worlds every few months, I am not in any danger, and I have everything I want here... My advice to you is just to change your perspective on things. Why don't you have another glass of whiskey?"

"Three years..."

After Lin Sanjiu heard what the girl said, she rushed out of the room. She scoured through the building once more. She was reluctant to accept the girl's words. Yet, she found nothing.

Sighing, she suppressed her anxiety and walked out of the washroom.

Even though she was in an apartment building, there was a public washroom on the seventh floor. It lacked maintenance, and the floor was wet. Nevertheless, it was usable.

The wooden stairs creaked noisily as Lin Sanjiu ran back to the third floor. The corridor on the third floor was exactly the same as before. The only difference was that there wasn't any noise. It had somehow stopped.

Lin Sanjiu strode toward the previous apartment unit she had been in, unit 320. In any case, those people had arrived in this pocket dimension before her so they might have other useful information...

She stopped in front of unit 320. She raised her fist and knocked a few times on the door. Dust fell from the gold door unit number. When she pulled her hand back from the red door, she could see the knuckle print she left behind.

After knocking a few times, the apartment unit remained silent.

"Is there anyone around?" she shouted with an unsettling feeling in her gut. "I came here before. Open the door!"

Her voice reverberated through the corridor but no one answered the door. She placed her ears to the door and listened, but there was only silence. Just when she was about to knock on the door again, Lin Sanjiu heard a sudden whisper amidst the dead silence.

"Stop knocking."

Lin Sanjiu felt all the hairs on her body standing. She extended her wings and quickly backed away from the door. The owner of the voice did not approach her. He simply looked at her quietly from where he was standing with light reflecting off the surface of his spectacles.

"Who are you?" she asked.

"When did he appear? Why couldn't I detect him?"

Seeing Lin Sanjiu's hostility, the scrawny young man adjusted his spectacles and pointed at the door of unit 320 with his veiny hand. He did not answer her question but instead warned her once more, "Don't try to get those people to open the door again. Trust me. You won't want to see the occupants opening the door for you a second time."

"What do you mean? Who are you?"

The scrawny man spoke very softly with his deep voice. It was as if he was afraid that his voice would alert someone.

"Did you arrive here today?" he asked before turning around. After he took a few steps, he realized that Lin Sanjiu was not following him so he couldn't help raising his brow. "I came here last month. I've already been trapped here for almost 20 days. My name is Geran."

"He must be another Growth-type who had entered this amusement park." Lin Sanjiu wasn't sure if he belonged to Progressor Alliance, so she just nodded cautiously, "My surname is Lin. Why did you stop me from knocking that door? What do you know about this attraction?"

The scrawny man tilted his head as if he had gotten some information from what she said. But, he answered her quickly with a quiet voice, "I saw and heard you the last time you knocked on that door."

Geran seemed to be a rather stoic person. He spoke with a cautious and collected tone. He pointed at the stairs, explaining, "I was standing at the stairs. No, I know you might not believe me. In this building, no matter what sort of detection techniques you use, it will always be inaccurate... Just like before, you didn't notice me approaching, right?"

Lin Sanjiu was speechless. Just like what Geran said, she did not sense anyone with her hypersensory state. If she weren't in this place, she wouldn't even imagine what it would be like.

Seeing that Geran wasn't hostile to her and had exposed his back to her once again, Lin Sanjiu followed him keeping a distance between them.

"I told you not to knock on the door because..." For a moment, Geran couldn't find the right word. After some consideration, he continued, "It is because both of us don't know what is behind that door."

"Over the past 20 days, I have observed other posthumans who knocked on the doors. I don't know what they saw, and I don't know if they met the same group of people you met. But, they acted the same way. After searching through the entire building, they usually went back the apartment unit doors a second or third time.

"I understand their mentality. No one would give up on any possible clues that will lead them to the exit... I was lucky. If I didn't realize that something was amiss, I would follow suit and start knocking on the doors to ask questions." As Geran spoke, they reached the stairway. With his hand on the railing, he turned his head and added, "I discovered that any posthuman who saw the occupant opening the door for the second time would..."

Before he could finish his sentence, his eyes, behind the sheen of his spectacles, widened. When Geran caught sight of what was behind Lin Sanjiu, his face turned sheet white. Before Lin Sanjiu could make a sound, he turned around and rushed down the stairs without saying a word.

Lin Sanjiu felt the back of her head go numb. Before she could follow behind him, she heard a creak from a door behind her. It seemed to be from unit 320. In the end, she did manage to make one of the occupants from unit 320 open their door.

A drop of cold sweat rolled down Lin Sanjiu's back and onto her spinal dimple.

"You're back. I fell asleep just now so I didn't hear the door," the girl's voice rang out behind Lin Sanjiu. She sounded the same. She spoke with a tipsy, intoxicated and indolent tone of voice. "Am I right? You didn't find the exit, did you?"

Lin Sanjiu quashed her urge to turn around. With her gaze fixed straight ahead, she took one stiff step forward. Geran had escaped without explaining things properly but Lin Sanjiu could infer what he meant from his unfinished sentence. "Any posthuman who saw

the occupant opening the door for the second time would..."

Lin Sanjiu didn't know what would happen to them but she knew that it wasn't anything good. In other words, she must not turn her head back no matter what happens. Lin Sanjiu had the impression that the girl with her converse shoes was approaching her. Lin Sanjiu wasn't certain. Between the rugs on the floor and the entire building, Lin Sanjiu felt that she could not trust her senses anymore. She opened her wings backward stirring up a gust of wind. Then, she sprinted toward the stairway. She made a sharp turn and raced down the stairs.

The second she twisted her body to make that sharp turn, she noticed a black round shoulder from the corner of her eye. Somehow it had already reached the back of her hand. It seemed like a face. "Why don't you come to me, come here..." the round face in the shadows taunted.

Lin Sanjiu blocked her left eyes with her hand. She did not dare to even look at the corridor again. She scrambled down the stairs all the way to the first floor. Seeing that she didn't have another way out, she shot a glance upstairs as her body tensed up like a threatened prey.

"Regardless what that girl was, she's not behind me now."

Lin Sanjiu waited with bated breath for a few seconds. The stairway was silent and there was no sign of anyone coming down.

"As long as I avoid seeing that 'person' who opens the door the second time, I'm safe?" Lin Sanjiu thought to herself shuddering at that thought while her heart pounded. She waited a while more until she was sure that things have calmed down before she let out a sigh of relief.

Incidentally, she found herself standing at the spot where she arrived. She looked around and felt a moment of doubt.

"Where is Geran?"

"There is only a single stairway in the building and there is no exit. If Geran ran down from the third floor, shouldn't he be here? Did he stop on the second floor?" Lin Sanjiu did not dare to make a single sound. She stepped on the rugs in front of the doors and slowly walked through the corridor on the first floor once more. However, it was just a straight corridor with no hiding spot. How was she going to find a fully grown man who had disappeared without a trace?

"Geran? Where are you?" It wasn't easy for Lin Sanjiu to meet a slightly more normal person. Even though he wasn't the most loyal person around, Lin Sanjiu wanted to see him again. Since Geran had been in this apartment building for more than 20 days, he definitely knew a lot more...

The only difference between the first floor and the other floors was that there was a dome-shaped alcove where the entrance was supposed to be. Lin Sanjiu loitered at the alcove for some time and just when she decided to go upstairs to look again, she heard a familiar creak sound.

That was the sound of a dark red wooden door opening and it sounded just beside her. The door to unit 101 opened before Lin Sanjiu's bewildered eyes. She saw the sheen from a pair of spectacles and the scrawny man who had introduced himself before peeked out.

Geran recognized Lin Sanjiu the moment he opened the door but he did not move. Instead, he peered cautiously at the corridor. After he confirmed that nobody had chased them down the stairway, he turned to Lin Sanjiu whispering, "You're pretty quick-witted! You didn't look behind you?"

Lin Sanjiu had her skeletal wings pressing against a wall. She did not move.

"My conjecture was right. The 'occupants' on each floor can only move within their own floors..." Geran adjusted his spectacles.

"Are you alright?"

Lin Sanjiu gulped. She didn't forget what she did just now...

The door of unit 101 opened only after she called out Geran's name a few times. In a sense, this could be considered the first time the door of unit 101 had been opened—

"Why... why are you in that apartment unit?" Lin Sanjiu asked dryly, feeling slightly afraid of the answer that she might get.

"Didn't that girl say that there was everything she wanted in her apartment unit?" Lin Sanjiu thought to herself.

Geran crooked his head and instantly understood her expression. "Ah," he exclaimed knowingly. "This room? 101 is the only apartment unit in the building that protects the players... It is our 'living space'. There isn't anything here. There are some sofas here and some drinks. The drinks get replenished every day."

"How did you find this place?" Lin Sanjiu stared at him unblinkingly. It was as if she was trying to find any warning signs from his face, but the man's skin, hair, eyes, and body looked very normal. He didn't look any different from before.

"That's because... the first door that I knocked was unit 101." Geran scratched his hair feeling a little hard-pressed by Lin Sanjiu's questions. Since nobody answered, I opened the door and walked in. After that, I found out that this was the only room that was truly unoccupied."

He walked out and stood in the corridor. Following Lin Sanjiu's gaze, he pointed at the rows of doors at the two sides of the corridor. There was silence.

"It is quiet so you might think that no one is living in those apartment units... If you knock on those doors, each one of them will eventually open."

Chapter 351: The Second Occupant

Clank. Lin Sanjiu placed an empty can of drink on a coffee table and squashed it flat. The white Coca-Cola brand could still be seen on the twisted and misshapen red can.

"I don't know why there is only Cola here and no bottled water." Geran pushed the items on tabletop toward Lin Sanjiu. "I think that's the reason why there is a washroom on the seventh floor."

Cola beverages generally increased kidney workload and didn't replace fluid well, and were even weak diuretics. From a survivalist's point of view, water was an absolute necessity. Lin Sanjiu knew these facts but she still finished the can of carbonated drink.

"However, I've been to the washroom on the seventh floor," she frowned as she looked at the cakes, biscuits and other snacks on the coffee table. She realized that she didn't have any appetite. "The tap isn't working. There's no water."

"I know," Geran adjusted his spectacles and sighed. "Desperate times call for desperate measures. We can't be too picky. I have been drinking the water from the toilet tank."

Lin Sanjiu had drunk things worse than water from a toilet tank. She nodded and scrutinized the apartment unit once more. Just as Geran had described, there wasn't much in this apartment unit. It didn't look any bigger than 20 m². The beige carpeted floor was closer to a brownish-black due to the stains all over it. There was a coffee table in the middle of the room and two dirty black two-seater sofas.

Oddly, when she first entered the apartment unit, she didn't notice the furniture. Her gaze was immediately drawn to the thing on the wall in front of her.

It was a window.

Lin Sanjiu could not remember if she saw a window in unit 320. In any case, this was the first window she noticed and she could even see the gray skies outside. Lin Sanjiu's heart raced and she quickly approached it to see what was outside.

Outside the window, there was a small village by a river. But, the moment Lin Sanjiu inspected the "village", her body went cold. After that, an inexplicable fury overwhelmed her. She was angry and frustrated and she wanted to scream. In the end, she stood quietly without saying a word for some time.

"I guess it is different in every single room," Geran grumbled moodily. "The painting behind the window in the male washroom is that of a bustling city center."

After Lin Sanjiu stood closer to the window, she noticed that the "outside view" of the window was actually just a painting even through the glass window panel. Its vibrant play on lightning in the painting made it look real from afar.

"Is this a joke?" Lin Sanjiu voice was cold and stiff. She controlled her churning emotions. When the girl on the third floor told her that there was no exit in the building, Lin Sanjiu was still unruffled, but after seeing this still life landscape painting posing as the outside world, she couldn't keep her hands from trembling.

Geran handed her an unopened can of cola, perhaps to appease her. Lin Sanjiu took it from him and downed it with a few large gulps. The sugar from the beverage quickly worked its magic. After a while, Lin Sanjiu felt slightly better.

"So, the first thing to note is that a player must not knock on the doors, right?" Lin Sanjiu asked Geran thoughtfully. "What else do you know about this building?"

The scrawny man shook his head. If one could generate the most average face from facial data of all males between 20 and 30 years old in China, he would probably look like Geran.

"Other than the 'living space' in Unit 101, and the door knocking, I don't know really know much more about this place than you," Geran crossed his hands and placed them over his knees. "However, after being trapped here for 20 days, I have already thoroughly thought about this attraction. With the information that you have given me, I have some idea about it."

"Care to explain?"

"You mentioned the female ticket seller telling you something before you came in. She told you specifically that this is a sightseeing attraction, right? Could it be possible that we have to see every part of this building?"

"But I didn't miss any spot." Just when Lin Sanjiu was about to rebut, she thought of something and immediately kept quiet. In fact, she had seen only the smallest area of the building which was its corridors. Lin Sanjiu had no idea what was behind every single dark red door. Once she realized this, her face turned a little sour no matter how gutsy she was.

Noticing her changed expression, Geran added, "After you knocked a door once, you are temporarily still safe. This might be a very critical point to note. Look, you're still perfectly fine, right?"

"For now..." Lin Sanjiu rued. "If the door to unit 320 opens the third time..."

Lin Sanjiu could still imagine the overly large round shadow she saw from the corner of her eyes. She froze for a moment before she asked Geran another question with a parched throat, "What will happen to the players who see an occupant who opens his door for the second or third time?"

"Who knows?" Unexpectedly, Geran shook his head again. His face also turned a little pale. "After a player entered an apartment unit for the second time, he appeared on the first floor the second day. However... I don't know how to explain this so that you can understand what I mean. I spent that day hiding in the washroom.

I don't mean he changed or anything," Geran seemed inept at expressing himself but Lin Sanjiu could sense a hint of lingering fear in his voice. With that, she got a vague inkling of the meaning behind his words. He continued, "The person did not look any different, but after surviving so many worlds, the least I could do was to trust my intuition so I avoided him the best I could. Ever since that day, I had not seen him. At that time, there was also another player I don't know. We didn't talk to each other."

Lin Sanjiu felt a shiver down her spine. She could only hope that Geran's deduction was wrong. If he was right, she would not be able to enter unit 320 again. If that was the case, how was she ever going to complete the requirement to "sightsee"?

Geran stopped speaking as if he had remembered something. After hesitating for a bit, he sighed and lamented, "Maybe, I could be wrong about everything. If that was the case, this game might be a little too easy. Peek into every unit and then exit. How could it be that easy?"

Even though Lin Sanjiu knew that Geran might have said that to comfort her, she did feel better. She nodded gratefully. "You might be on to something. If there is a 'person' living in each apartment unit, based on my experience, they should be able to provide some information... Maybe, we should try to gather more information first."

The problem with both their conclusions on the situation was that they would need to interact with the "occupant" behind each door. They both became quiet, momentarily unable to make a decision. After sitting dully for some time and not being able to come to a better solution, Lin Sanjiu stood up first and let out a heavy sigh. "In any case, we should get moving," Lin Sanjiu urged.

Geran might be a prudent and intelligent person. However, he might be overly cautious, otherwise, he probably wouldn't be trapped for around 20 days.

On the other hand, whenever Lin Sanjiu couldn't think of any better solutions, she would just rely on her muscles. "Let's go!" she prompted.

"Where to?" Geran asked, feeling somewhat puzzled.

"Let's go to the seventh flo—no," Lin Sanjiu suddenly remembered that there was only a male and female washroom there and nothing else, so she changed her mind, "We'll start from the sixth floor and knock on every door. No matter which of us is right, let's look at what is behind those doors first."

As for unit 320, Lin Sanjiu decided not to think about the issue at this moment.

Even though Geran had his misgivings, he finally stood up and followed Lin Sanjiu out.

More lights in the corridor were now damaged. After the door to unit 101 was closed, the flickering lights in the corridor became even more obvious. The end of the silent corridor had been swallowed by the dark and when they focused on anything in the flickering light, their eyes started to hurt. Lin Sanjiu and Geran tried their best to keep their footsteps as quiet as possible, as they slowly climbed up the stairway.

After they stopped talking, the whole building fell into a death-like silence. Each time they took a step, the floorboards made loud, distinct creaks. When they were about to reach the third floor, Lin Sanjiu stopped.

"You mentioned that the occupants can only move on their own floors..." Lin Sanjiu could feel the back of her neck going cold and her skin tingling, "About that... How long will they usually move around the corridor?"

Geran pursed his lips without saying a word. He took two steps up and turned his ear to listen to the corridor. After that, he took off his belt. The flashy box-frame buckle didn't seem to fit his

personality at all.

"They usually don't stay in the corridor for long. But, just to be safe, we can attach this buckle to your wing. I'll secure the belt like this," Geran secured the belt and pointed at the shiny buckle, "Stretch that bone on your wing out, yes, just like that... Even though we can't see any clear reflections, it is metal so we can at least see shadows if anything moves."

Standing at the stairway leading to the third floor, Lin Sanjiu stretched one of the spines of the skeletal wing outward with some effort. She held her breath as she stared at the little metallic buckle.

The metal plate wasn't good enough to reflect any proper image except a blurred shadow of the corridor. After waiting for some time, they did not spot anything in the blurred reflection on the buckle. They carefully walked upstairs and scanned the corridor quickly. Seeing that all the doors were closed, they sprinted up the stairs to the fourth floor.

When they saw the unit number "601", their expressions turned grim. No matter what happened, they had to grit their teeth and take that risk...

Lin Sanjiu tossed a glance at Geran before she walked toward a dark red wooden door by herself. As her heart pounded rapidly, she slowly raised her hand. There was a dry flower wreath on the door of unit 601. It seemed to be a decoration that had not been taken down for a long time after a festive celebration.

Lin Sanjiu had never imagined that she would be afraid to knock on a door.

Lightly and almost accompanied by a bit of trepidation, she knocked on the door with her knuckle. Lin Sanjiu could even sense Geran moving backward. He was standing at the edge of the stairway. After she knocked on the door a few times, there was no response. It was silent.

"Why... why don't we forget it," Geran said in the same soft voice but more hastily. "Let's go back and discuss this..."

Lin Sanjiu ignored his suggestion and knocked on the door another two times. However, this time, the sound of her knocks wavered.

There seemed to be a very soft sound of footsteps from behind the door. Unlike normal distinct footsteps, that was the sound of something dragging their feet. Yet, each step sounded like it was a long stride. Lin Sanjiu gulped. The muscles all over her body tensed up. When the brass handle of the door slowly rotated, Lin Sanjiu's mind became blank.

The red wooden door opened with a creak and a gap slowly appeared between the door and its frame. As she heard the door opening, Lin Sanjiu heard a creak from the stairway. Lin Sanjiu knew, even without looking, that Geran had run away.

Before she could even consider if Geran had set her up and decide to move, it was already too late. The "person" behind the door—if it could be considered a person—had already peeked out from the gap.

Lin Sanjiu locked her eyes on that face without moving an inch. It did not even cross her mind that she would see that person here.

"Livia?"

A brown haired woman curled one corner of her lips, revealing the deep wrinkles around her mouth. She did not wear one of her shoes properly but instead step on it barefooted. That strange sound of her walking was probably because she was dragging one shoe along.

"How can you be here?" Lin Sanjiu was stupefied. "You ran to Swan Route?"

"You're still alive," Livia also seemed surprised to see Lin Sanjiu. She looked behind Lin Sanjiu and lifted the corner of her lips. "I

entered this attraction yesterday afternoon... Up until now, I still can't find the exit."

"Why are you in this room?" This question was stuck in Lin Sanjiu's throat, she couldn't bring herself to verbalize it.

Livia supported her face, which always looked tired, with one hand. "All the units in the building are empty. I randomly chose one to rest. Did you just arrive? Do you want to come in and chat? But you have to wait for me, I'm not dressed properly now..."

Then, she closed the door.

Chapter 352: Separated by a Door

The fluorescent light flickered, and the moment the fluorescent light dimmed darkness enveloped the wooden door of unit 601. Then, in the blink of an eye, the light returned, the darkness ebbed, and the mahogany-colored wooden door once again appeared. From a closer look, a thick layer of dust had collected on the surface of the door, accentuating the moth-eaten door.

The corridor was quiet. So quiet that Lin Sanjiu could hear her blood flowing through her body.

Her muscles screamed. Ever since she came, she had not relaxed for even a single second. The consequence of that was that her muscles were extremely sore.

Quietly, as if to conceal her movements from herself, she slowly inched toward the stairway.

The building continued its slumber, and her actions did not wake it up.

Four minutes passed, but the door to the room where Livia resided remained tightly shut.

"Why does she need so much time to get dressed?"

After Livia closed the door, the building plunged into death-like silence. It gave Lin Sanjiu the impression that the dim corridor and the door in front of her were the only things left in the world.

Hearing her hurried breathing, despair slowly began to loom over her as the minutes ticked away.

There were several times she lifted her hand, wanting to knock on the door, but she forewent her attempts every time. She was scared and too afraid to confront the unknown lurking behind the door.

She had knocked on the door of unit 601 once, so regardless of

who was telling the truth, be it Geran or Livia, she refused to risk herself again. As she did not want to knock on the door, she waited. Betting on the flimsy prospect that everything would turn out better, she decided to wait for Livia for some more time. As she waited, she felt something growing cold in her chest. It chilled her, and panic filled every cell in her body.

Step by step, slowly and steadily, she approached the stairway. As her hand almost reached the wooden handrails of the stairway, a distant voice rang in her mind, "Livia is not right."

Without a doubt, Livia had entered this attraction. As Lin Sanjiu mulled over her conversation with Livia, the notion that Livia was baiting her to knock the door for the second time grew stronger.

Perhaps like the girl in unit 320, Livia was trapped in the building as well.

As Lin Sanjiu took another step back, her skeletal wings hit the handrail of the stairway before her hand did. A clank that sounded like a rap on the door reverberated and traveled fast and far through the silent corridor. Then, under the sinister pulse of the fluorescent light, the brass handle of unit 601 rattled. Lin Sanjiu's frayed nerves crumbled. Without wasting any time, she turned and fled down the stair.

"Garan is right about everything here."

Lin Sanjiu's hurried footsteps pounding on the flight of staircases broke the silence that prevailed in the apartment building. Within the moment of a few breaths, she had reached the first floor.

She looked back and nothing was behind her.

The conversation she had with Geran before surfaced in her mind, and she replayed the sentence in her head, "Every occupant can only move on their floor."

"So even if Livia has turned into one of those things, there is no way she can leave her floor and chase after me now."

Relieved, Lin Sanjiu's breathing pace become normal again. Then, somewhere inside her, an ember grew into a small flame as she thought about Geran.

Even though Geran was a prudent and sagacious man, and he found many traps in the building, he was too unreliable! How could he leave her alone facing the unknown in unit 601? He was such a wimp. It was why he had been trapped there for twenty days!

"Hey!" She rushed to unit 101 in two steps and rapped on the door twice. Her voice filled with rage, "Geran, I know you're in there. Open the door now!"

Much to her chagrin, nobody answered her call. After she waited two seconds, she grabbed the brass handle and attempted to open the door. However, the brass handle wouldn't budge. It seemed to have been locked from inside.

It was Geran who opened the door for her when she entered unit 101 before, so she did not know if the door was locked at that time or not.

Lin Sanjiu lifted her hand again, and when her knuckle almost hit the wooden door, she stopped.

The gold number plate with 101 carved on it flashed with a faint reflection. Silence filled the air.

"If I knock on the door again, will that count as the second time?"

Lin Sanjiu was halted by the thought. She wobbled on her feet as she walked two steps backward. Soon after, she felt that she was being too sensitive as if a tree or a bush looked like an enemy to her now. After all, Geran had said that this room was the only room in the building that protected the players. She found no reason to doubt Geran's words.

She then recalled how she met Geran on the third floor and how they spent the next three hours together. If he had turned into one

of those things, then there were two issues she had to consider: first was that he could not appear on another floor, and the second was that he had plenty of opportunities to attack her, so why now?

The thought comforted Lin Sanjiu some, but she still could not bring herself to knock on the door again.

Taking a safety measure, she silently bolted to the stairway that led to the second floor. Without looking at the first floor, Lin Sanjiu called Geran again while standing on the staircase, "Geran?"

Nobody replied, and the air around her seemed to have stopped moving. It was heavy, and it was suffocating.

"Geran, are you there?" She called again after a few seconds.

As the silence continued to reign over the first floor, her heart sank. It was as if Geran had disappeared into the ether. He did not respond even after she waited for a couple of minutes.

"Where would he be if he's not in unit 101?"

Unbeknownst to her, cold sweat began to form and ooze from her pores, soaking her back as she anxiously positioned herself on the staircase. She did not know whether should she go down the stairs or go up.

Seeing that seeking a solution with her jumbled mind was not going to get her anywhere, Lin Sanjiu took a deep breath to calm down her raging, wild thoughts. Maybe the deep breath she took was helpful since her mind did seem clearer now. Then, with her now-clearer mind, Lin Sanjiu realized the situation might not be as bad as it appeared if she looked at it from another angle. When she met Livia on the sixth floor, she did not turn her head, so she didn't know if Geran had gone down the stairway. What if Geran acted in a diametrically opposite way and went up to the seventh floor instead?

There were no rooms on the seventh floor, and it was nearest to the sixth floor. The chances that Geran had escaped to the

washroom in a rush was high!

Once she got to this point, Lin Sanjiu jumped to her feet, tilted her head, and glanced up to the stairs that hovered overhead.

She had staked out the third floor earlier with Geran, so she was sure that there was no one in that corridor. She bolted toward the fifth floor with a whack and stopped at the last staircase. The sixth floor was just one step away from her.

When Lin Sanjiu surveyed the floor with Geran, he used his buckle to check the surrounding. After he retrieved the buckle, he did not wear it; instead, he held it in his hand. Lin Sanjiu regretted that she had not taken it from him when she had the chance.

After Lin Sanjiu prepared herself both physically and mentally, she made her first tentative steps onto the hushed sixth floor.

As usual, the first thing that welcomed her once she emerged from the stairway was unit 601. The door remained the same: shabby and time-worn. The dry flower wreath that was once hung on the door was on the edge of falling off, hanging askew on the door. It seemed that somebody had knocked it over.

However, none of that bothered Lin Sanjiu. She had a more important task at hand. As she walked through the passage to the seventh floor, despite it being a rather short distance, she wished she had the power of invisibility so that nobody would notice her presence. After she turned down a corner, unit 601 vanished from her sight.

Never once had she felt that the washroom was such a warm and lovely place.

Gasping, Lin Sanjiu charged head-on into the men's washroom on her left. Without minding the puddle of water accumulating on the white-tiled floor, she quickly closed the door.

She couldn't fathom her actions or what she was running from. There were no other people in the apartment building whatsoever.

"Anybody here?" When the words escaped her mouth she realized that her voice was trembling. She asked again, "Geran, are you in here?"

Aside from the mirror's direction, the structure of the men's washroom was similar to that of the women's washroom. There were a long basin and a large mirror on the right side and a few dirty urinals on the left side of the wall. One of the urinals was filled to the brim with yellow liquid, garnished with a few cigarette ends on the surface of it. Further away was a row of cubicles that extended into the dark end of the washroom where the light did not reach.

Her voice bounced off the tiled wall and echoed in the empty washroom.

"Geran?"

The pipe dripped constantly, and Lin Sanjiu's shoes were soaked after she took two steps forward.

The grey door of the first cubicle was unlatched, allowing the darkness inside to seep from the small gap between the door and the frame. Lin Sanjiu did not push the door open. Instead, she bowed down and looked into the cubicle from the space under the door.

What met her gaze first was an old toilet rooted silently on the tiled floor. It was dim inside, and there was no sign of a person in the cubicle.

Lin Sanjiu went forward to check the next four cubicles. She found nothing. As she stopped, a blank expression graced her face.

Geran wasn't here. If it wasn't for her memories replaying the episode from a few minutes prior, she might have begun to believe that she was the only person in the apartment building.

"This is weird."

Perhaps the unending, death-like, and eerie silence had been too

unbearable. It made Lin Sanjiu's stomach flip-flop as she mumbled under her breath, "Where could he have gone?"

"Could it be that he was too anxious and had mistakenly run into the women's washroom?"

Lin Sanjiu could not think of other ideas as to where he could have gone aside from the women's washroom.

After taking a step forward, a vague idea suddenly manifested in her mind, "Something... Somewhere is not right here. What could it be?"

As she was immersed in her thoughts, she slowly turned around.

The woman in the mirror followed suit. She had pale skin, the skeletal wings on her back still had a menacing look. Inside of the mirror was a similar and quiet washroom, albeit the only part of it was visible because the other half was hidden in the shadows.

Her shoes hit the puddle of water on the floor with a splash as she moved toward the inner part of the washroom.

Geran once told her that the painting behind the window of the men's washroom on the seventh floor was of a bustling city center.

The fake window was just beside the last cubicle, It was hidden in the dark, so it was hard for people to notice it. Lin Sanjiu walked closer to it. She crouched down and picked up a pair of gold-rimmed glasses from the corner of the wall right under the window.

The lenses reflected under the pale light.

The first reaction Lin Sanjiu had was Geran had met his end. However, once she thought for a moment, she couldn't remember what color Geran's glasses were. When she converted the glasses into a card, the description on the card only told her that it was [a pair of ordinary glasses for astigmatism] and did not tell her who owned the glasses.

Feeling helpless, Lin Sanjiu just stored the card in her body. After that, she left the men's washroom and went to the women's washroom.

She knew that Geran was probably not in the women's washroom judging from the commotion she had caused. If Geran were really in the women's washroom, he would have come out to meet her already when he heard her voice.

She entered the women's washroom and just as she expected, there was no one in there.

A deep sense of fatigue rose in Lin Sanjiu's heart. Ever since she entered this attraction, everything she encountered was way off the scale. She was out of her league, and it exhausted her.

She did not wish to face the apartment units at downstairs anymore. Hence, she found herself a cubicle, closed the toilet's lid, and sat on it. She rested her wings on top of the water tank. It was less comfortable, but she was too lazy to mind this small matter.

Staring at the door with a vacant expression while it closed, Lin Sanjiu was at lost of what should she do next. The predicament she was in this time could neither be solved through force nor wit. It made her remember her day at Kisaragi Station.

"How can I get out from here?"

If it were not for her belief that there had to be a way to clear this attraction, she would have long been tormented to death by her anxiety. Just as she rubbed her neck with her hand and stood up, the door to the washroom was shoved open.

At this moment, the air froze, and her throat went dry.

The footsteps belonged to human and were accompanied by the splashing of water that was conspicuously loud in the silent washroom. The invader spoke as she moved toward Lin Sanjiu's cubicle.

"Miss Lin, are you in there?"

Lin Sanjiu eyes bulged in shock as a pair of black sneakers stopped outside her cubicle. The owner had stepped on the shoes previously. Lin Sanjiu could see the crease on the shoes.

"Livia?"

"Why didn't you wait for me? Didn't I tell you to wait for me while I got dressed?" It seemed to Lin Sanjiu that Livia knew she was here all along. Then, she called her "Miss Lin" twice.

"Since Livia could get to the seventh floor, does that means that she is all right?"

"Maybe she is the kind of person who is slow at getting dressed?"

Lin Sanjiu then probed, her voice was shivering, "How-- how did you get up here?"

"I came here to find you, obviously," Livia's answer had no flaw, "Besides, I needed to use the toilet. I don't understand why all the rooms in this apartment have no washrooms aside from the seventh floor."

Heaving a sigh, Lin Sanjiu's heart slowly regained its healthy pace.

Putting aside the fact that Livia could not move to another floor if she had been turned, Lin Sanjiu did not knock on unit 601 the second time, nor did she call Livia by her name, so no matter how she looked at it, she did not meet the requirement of "knocking the door for the second time."

"I've met a player here, but he's gone missing too," as Lin Sanjiu talked, she stood up. She did not know why she used the word "too" in her sentence, "It's a he. I'm not sure if you met—"

The last letter stuck in her throat. She could not spit it out.

Lin Sanjiu, who stood at 180 cm now looked over the top edge of the door and saw a head of black hair.

"Livia is not that tall."

"What are you doing in there? Come on out now," the voice, which Lin Sanjiu believed belong to a woman, said. She was smiling.

Chapter 353: Dual Rules?

When Lin Sanjiu lifted her hand, the thought "Why am I doing this?" surfaced in her mind. Nevertheless, the suspicious question did not stay long enough in her mind to stop her next movement. She grabbed the brass handle tightly and twisted it. A clank sounded as the mahogany-colored wooden door to unit 320 opened with a creak.

Then, she stepped into the apartment unit—

Let's rewind to twenty minutes before when Lin Sanjiu met Livia in the washroom.

——

Lin Sanjiu stared fixedly at the head of black hair that was slightly higher than the door.

The lack of space in the cubicle had hindered her movement. She couldn't fully extend her wings. Hence, she went for another alternative. As she summoned her [Tornado Whip], she sneakily climbed on top of the toilet lid.

After she claimed a relatively higher spot, she said coolly, "I didn't lock the door. Just push it."

Instead of panicking, Lin Sanjiu felt serene in her heart since the danger was imminent. She had no idea what kind of creature was waiting for her on the other of the door, but she was clear that compared to dealing with an enemy which could not be seen or touched, she preferred the one with flesh and blood.

The head moved, then the door to her cubicle creaked open.

Apparently, the person outside only pushed lightly on the door. As the door swayed open, Livia—who looked like the real Livia—appeared in her sight.

Blonde hair, medium height, a face that always looked tired: she

was indeed the Livia that she knew.

"What are you doing?" Startled by Lin Sanjiu's battle stance, Livia quickly recoiled a few steps and asked, "Are you trying to attack me?"

The head of black hair had disappeared and everything outside of the cubicle looked precisely as before. Lin Sanjiu's eyebrows were brought together tightly, forming a deep furrow on her forehead. She held her [Tornado Whip] firmly and decided not to do anything rash for the moment.

It was easy for her to get rid of Livia here, but getting herself dragged into some unnecessary battle was the last thing she wished.

After all, she did not know much about this place.

"Nothing. Just a precaution," the actor in Lin Sanjiu took the stage. She waved her hand and put the [Tornado Whip] away. After she showed Livia that she had no weapon, she got out of the cubicle. "What took you so long to get dressed?"

Lin Sanjiu's reply did not at all comfort Livia. She held on to her guard and kept her distance of a few steps from Lin Sanjiu. "Is it? I came out right after I got dressed. I didn't take too long."

This was a childish argument, and Lin Sanjiu knew that pointing the finger at each other at this moment would not get them anywhere. As she narrowed her eyes and studied Livia, she changed to another topic, "How much you know about this place? What are we going to do next?"

"Not much," Livia said briefly, "I entered a few rooms, and all of them were empty. I did not meet any other players either, so even if I wanted to gather information about this place, there were no people for me to ask."

Lin Sanjiu remained silent for a moment before saying, "I do know of a way if you want to gather intel about this building."

Livia raised her head and looked at Lin Sanjiu with a bit of confusion adorned on her face. It was the expression of a player that had been trapped inside an attraction.

Lin Sanjiu felt words paled in comparison to action. She gestured with a nod of her chin to Livia and exited the washroom.

It was pretty easy to prove the truth in Livia's words.

The stairway was situated on the right side of the women's washroom. After ordering Mrs. Manas to take care of her back, Lin Sanjiu took the first step and led Livia down the stairs. Before they could finish walking the flight of stairs, unit 601 and half of unit 603 that stood beside unit 601 appeared.

Lin Sanjiu stopped, turned around to face Livia and asked, "How many rooms have you entered so far?"

"I've entered the first few rooms on the sixth floor," Livia was perplexed by her question, "What's wrong?"

"So I guess you wouldn't mind entering the room again, right?" Lin Sanjiu shot a warm smile at her, "Don't enter unit 601, enter unit 603."

Livia was dumbfounded. She was unable to comprehend and was extremely suspicious of Lin Sanjiu's demand. Nevertheless, after darting a glance at Lin Sanjiu, she did not voice out her doubt and did what Lin Sanjiu had asked her to do. "Didn't I tell you that there was nothing in the rooms?" As she said, she twisted the brass handle.

The door to unit 603 opened before Lin Sanjiu's bewildered eyes.

As if she was proving her words, Livia stepped into the room without waiting for Lin Sanjiu's next order, "See? Nothing is in here."

From Lin Sanjiu's position, she could only see a portion of the room. There was a shoe cabinet in the entranceway, a vase of dried flower on top of the shoe cabinet, and an empty hallstand. The rest

of the room was blocked by a wall.

"We really can enter the room!"

Just as the thought materialized in Lin Sanjiu's mind, her body had made the action before her brain could give the order. As she rushed toward unit 603, Livia's voice drifted into her ears, "Come here and take a look yourself, there isn't anybody in here..."

A sudden blast of wind appeared without warning. It brushed Lin Sanjiu's hair back away from her face. She paused and before she could resume her sprinting, the wind had swept the door close with a bang, killing whatever Livia was trying to say next.

It happened too fast that Lin Sanjiu's eyes were wide open in astonishment as she stood in a trance staring at the door.

She had lost track of time as of how long she had been standing. Then, she lifted her trembling hand.

Knock. Knock . Two hesitating rat-a-tat sounds reverberated far down the corridor.

Nobody answered the door.

Her left hand dripped with sweat as she gripped the card containing the [Tornado Whip] tightly. She held her breath and listened but nothing, no sound transmitted into her ear. She found herself once again enveloped in silence after the echo dissipated.

Just as she lifted her right hand to knock on the door again, the brass handle rotated, and the mahogany-colored wooden door slit open.

From the slit emerged a face, but the face did not belong to Livia.

It was an old lady in the Autumn of her life. Her face was full of smiles.

The old lady had gunmetal grey, curly hair draped neatly around her shoulders. Her wrinkly skin looked like a discarded, wrinkled, paper bag left to itself. Everything on her face was bent downward,

only her bright red lips curved upward, forming an arc with two sharp points on either of her cheeks.

With a husky voice, the old woman asked, "Who are you looking for, sweetheart?"

Clearly, she was the occupant of this apartment.

Lin Sanjiu had unwittingly taken a step back. Her heartbeat picked up its pace. After feeling the sharp edges of the card in her hand, her heartbeat seemed to slow a bit. She then asked the old lady, "Who are you? Have you seen the woman that entered this unit just now?"

"I have been staying here for twenty years, and nobody ever pays me a visit," the old lady said as she observed Lin Sanjiu with her dull and cloudy eyes under her shaggy eyelids. When she smiled, her mouth looked peculiarly large, "Thieves, though, visit me occasionally, but I'm too old, so I cannot catch them and all of them have escaped through the window."

"Window?"

Unconsciously, Lin Sanjiu raised her head, and her eyes found the window right behind the old lady.

Behind the opened window was an alley. It was too far from her; Lin Sanjiu could not make sure was it a true-to-life painting, or if it was a real alley.

But the feeling of being kissed by the wind just now was still vividly fresh to her, so had Livia left this building through the window?

"I'm going back to rest if you don't have anything else that requires my assistance," the old lady didn't move her gaze away from Lin Sanjiu when she spoke. As she closed the door, she smiled at her, "Pay me a visit when you're free. I'm thrilled to meet you youngsters."

The door to unit 603 closed once again.

Once the wooden door was shut, the apartment building sunk into a pool of silence. Lin Sanjiu couldn't hear any footsteps behind the door, and there was no sound of breathing either. It was as if the old lady was an inanimate object standing behind the door... Suddenly, Lin Sanjiu's intuition kicked in. She turned around and rushed toward the stairway.

"Where are you going?" Mrs. Manas asked, baffled by her sudden action.

"I think," Lin Sanjiu's voice was shaking, "I think both of them are right."

"What do you mean?"

"In this apartment, both the rules 'knocking the door' and 'entering the apartment unit' work in parallel," amidst the creaking sounds caused by the collision between Lin Sanjiu's feet and the carpeted corridor, Lin Sanjiu voiced out her thoughts quickly to Mrs. Manas, "Both Geran and Livia are telling the truth. Both of them are fine as well— at least, they were fine until just now."

If a player knocked on the door, the occupants of that apartment unit would come out to greet him or her. If the player barged into the unit without knocking on the door or opened the door without waiting for the occupants, then the apartment unit would be empty. That explained why Geran's words contradicted Livia's!

While from her experience, it seemed that the occupants of this apartment building would try to hoodwink the player into knocking on their door just like the gaggle of youngsters and the old lady.

Lin Sanjiu stormed straight to the third floor. With her thunderous heartbeat hammering in her ears, Lin Sanjiu took a deep breath and walked up to unit 320. She twisted the brass holder.

She might be wrong, and the possibility that she bet on the wrong horse was ridiculously high. If she was wrong, what would happen next?

Then, the door to unit 320 opened.

Just as Lin Sanjiu had expected, there were no people inside the unit. The stains and empty bottles were still there, but the bunch of youngsters was nowhere to be seen. Even the smell of the burnt weed had disappeared.

Lin Sanjiu supported the door to prevent it from closing with her skeletal wings and walked gingerly into the unit.

Behind the window of unit 320 was a landscape painting showing a majestic desert. Even though it looked extremely real, but she knew from a glance that it was only a painting.

Lin Sanjiu thought she should not stay too long in unit 320. As such, she carefully maneuvered her skeletal wings through the corridor when she exited unit 320. As long as she did not produce any sound that would make the thing inside unit 320 to open the door, then it wouldn't be counted as "the third time knocking the door."

With her racing heart and raging mind, she made herself safe on the first floor.

"So you're right," Mrs. Manas was surprised, "However, it won't change anything since you still don't know where the exit is!"

Lin Sanjiu did not walk into unit 101. She just glanced at it and moved further through the corridor. Her eyebrows drew together and entangled tightly on her forehead. Her mind kept running as she murmured, "There must be a reason why the rules exist. If I can iron out the relationship between the rules, I might be able to find the exit."

In order to verify her speculation, she went to the last unit in the corridor and opened the door starting from unit 120. Like what she

had seen in unit 320, all the apartment units were empty. There were no traces of people living there. However, she did find that the paintings were different in each unit's window.

"Same," Lin Sanjiu stood outside unit 108 and roughly scrutinized its interior. She then said, "Nothing here."

There was a mixture of disappointment and relief in her tone.

Unit 108 was a single apartment. The unit was so tiny that she could finish surveying the room in a glance. Just as she was going to close the door and go to the next unit, a soft voice that was particularly familiar to her sounded from her behind her, "Miss Lin."

"Geran."

Mrs. Manas had deactivated her [Higher Conscious Scan] since it had no effect in this apartment building, so Lin Sanjiu could not see the thing behind her. Then, at this instance, a daring thought surfaced in her mind that sent her hair standing on their ends.

The reason Geran mistook unit 101 as the "living room" was because unit 101 was empty. He probably entered unit 101 right after he knocked the door without waiting for the "occupant" in the unit to open the door for him. That's why unit 101 was empty. In another way, if he waited for a while after he knocked on the door, somebody, perhaps the occupants would have answered the door.

In this sense, he did the same thing Livia had done. Regardless of whether were they alive or dead at that time, they had "moved" into the apartment.

"Can you hear me, Miss Lin?" Geran's voice reverberated in the corridor. It seemed that he was closing in on her, "I've found a way to get out from here. Do you want to come and have a look?"

Lin Sanjiu would not forget that she had knocked on the door to unit 101 twice.

[Tornado Whip] materialized in her left hand. Then, she accumulated all her power and sent a fierce gale towards the source of the voice. When the attack that could destroy half of the apartment dispersed. Geran's voice rang beside her ear.

"Why don't you turn around, Miss Lin?"

When he talked, he wasn't breathing.

Chapter 354: Two Routes that Lay Before Lin Sanjiu

If Lin Sanjiu had the chance to meet the female ticker seller again, she swore she would grab her by her collar and pull her out from the glass ticket booth. She wanted to ask what was going on in her mind when she told her this was a "sightseeing attraction."

The moment Geran's voice rang out, Lin Sanjiu did not turn around and launched a barrage of concentrated, focused attacks at him. However, much to her dismay, all of her attacks were neutralized by an unknown force.

She had no idea whether or not any of her attacks had hit her target.

On second thought, even her hypersensory had lapsed in the apartment building; it was no surprise to her that an ordinary attack would fail as well.

"Miss Lin, why do you attack me?" Geran's voice sounded like he was surprised, "It's me, Geran. I've found a path that will lead us to the exit. You don't want to see?"

Lin Sanjiu took a deep breath and held on to her sangfroid so that her nerves would not get the best of her. This was because she had realized that the thing that introduced itself as "Geran" would not attack her.

"Come over here, turn around. The exit is just around the corner. Anyway, turn around, and sneak a peek," the "Geran" said, there was a smile in his voice.

She was very familiar with this scene. If Lin Sanjiu had been given enough time to think about her situation, she would have probably begun to doubt herself and not do what she was going to do next. Geran was extremely close to her; Lin Sanjiu knew that very well. A light, dark-colored shadow crawled onto her shoulder

and cast a huge dark patch on the door of unit 108.

With her eyes filled with fear, the shadow turned slowly and bent its head until it almost touched her cheek.

As soon as the corner of her eyes caught that glimpse of darkness, a thought flickered in her mind, and before she knew she was doing it, her hand had already landed on the door of unit 108.

The shadow that loomed over the wooden door trembled, and "Geran" fell silent.

Very soon, the sound of footsteps drifted from within unit 108 into Lin Sanjiu's ears. Then, the brass handle rattled, and a stubbled, scrawny man came out of the unit.

The man looked like he was in his forties. He smelled like he hadn't taken a bath in ages. Just as he approached Lin Sanjiu in his rumpled plaid shirt, his sour body odor drifted up and hung in her nose. His gaze did not stay long on Lin Sanjiu as he very soon shifted his attention over to the thing behind her. Then, he turned his gaze back to Lin Sanjiu, smiling amiably at her.

Since Lin Sanjiu was oblivious of the thing behind her, she just spread her skeletal wings and prepared herself for any adversaries. Her back was soaked with cold sweat.

She somehow felt that she had been betting all the time since she entered this apartment building.

"Go on," she gave her full attention on the stubbled man with unblinking eyes. She was trembling, very much afraid that she might accidentally see "Geran" if she ever let down her guard, "Speak what you have."

Lin Sanjiu felt God had a wicked sense of humor and He had played a mean joke on Geran and her. The reason she did not dare to turn her head around was that Geran had mentioned to her before that as players, they were forbidden to "see" the same occupant twice. But now, the rules were being used on "Geran."

Taking a deep breath, Lin Sanjiu hoped that she had placed the right bet.

The stubbled man remained quiet as he continued to observe her, and when he moved his eyeballs, it sent Lin Sanjiu into a panic so severe that she nearly screamed. The movement of his eyeballs was minute. If one did not pay attention to his eyes, you would never notice that his eyeballs had moved.

This could only mean one thing: the thing that he was looking at was very, extremely, super close to Lin Sanjiu now.

When Lin Sanjiu began to feel numbness in her body, the stubbled man finally spoke. He laughed, "Well, well, finally. A sharp one."

He fixed his eyes on Lin Sanjiu, and as he opened his mouth, his row of yellow teeth showed behind his beard, "There are two things I can tell you. Which one you wish to listen first?"

"Of course, that goes without saying," Just as Lin Sanjiu heaved a sigh of relief that her conjecture was right, a sense of superiority surfaced in her mind. Perhaps the sense of superiority had escaped her mind and showed on her face. The stubbled man narrowed his eyes, and he smiled.

"I hate all the occupants here. I only met them once. On the day I moved in. Then, I didn't want to see them ever again," he finished his sentence with a hint of zeal in his tone that made him sound a little bit cruel, "Even if it is newcomer."

Lin Sanjiu's heart sank, sinking into the floor and into the earth below.

The stubbled man had given Lin Sanjiu two very distinct clues: players should never see the face of an occupant twice, and the "new occupant" he referred to was probably Geran.

Upon getting his answers, her mind full of fog was getting clearer.

It was useless to check through every apartment units without knocking on the door first. What Lin Sanjiu had to do was to knock on the door, and collect whatever information from the occupant she could. However, the information would vary according to the scenario.

"We have never been able to find the way out after staying here for three years" and "the apartment unit will give you anything you wish" were what the young girl in unit 320 told Lin Sanjiu when she was looking for an exit. She always thought that girl said so was to keep. Never once had she considered the meaning behind the quote "the apartment unit will give you anything you wish." When she was looking for Livia, the old lady told her "all the burglars that break into her house in recent years escaped through the window."

"So, from the information I collected from that girl and that old lady, one of the windows in either of the apartment units is the exit, but which units?"

"Oh yeah, before I forget," the stubbled man resumed his talking. He never tore his gaze away from the behind Lin Sanjiu. He talked in a reserved manner, "I'm not the caretaker of this apartment. It's beyond my control as to what the other occupant wants to do."

"Huh?"

Startled, the tiny hairs on the back of Lin Sanjiu's neck stood on their ends. Then, before she could verbalize anything in her mind, a soft call tickled her ear, "Miss Lin."

As the thing spoke, a shadow floated from beside Lin Sanjiu's ear. Like a slithering snake, it shimmied into the corner of her sight.

Lin Sanjiu felt she must do something, anything; otherwise, she would be the next one saying goodbye to this world. Forcing a growl out of her throat, Lin Sanjiu made a sharp turn and sprinted in the opposite direction. She closed her eyes, running at her top speed toward the deeper of the corridor as the gap between her and

the stairway grew larger with every step she took as she neared the end of the corridor.

She had no time to make a turn now, "Geran" trailed behind her like he was her shadow.

"Move faster!" Mrs. Manas yelled in her psyche. She clucked, "Desperate calls for desperate measure, enter that unit now!"

Lin Sanjiu covered her eyes with her hand so that she would not see "Geran." Then, she curled her body and rammed into unit 119 in the corner of the corridor. As soon as she landed on the floor, she kicked the door and closed it before that thing came inside.

She inhaled a few large gulps of air and stormed further into the unit without turning her head. Behind her was silence. It seemed that "Geran" could not enter this unit.

"If Geran has become the new occupant here, then he can only enter unit 101."

As this thought daunted on Lin Sanjiu, she relaxed. Her skeletal wings slumped.

Before that, she was very sure that Geran was still a healthy living person. He could move within the floors and tell her rules about this apartment building.

"So what had happened and when did it happen to make Geran turn entirely into an "occupant?"

"I guess," Similar to Lin Sanjiu, Mrs. Manas had yet recovered from the nail-biting manhunt. Her voice was shaking as she said, "I have a little insight into how Geran died."

Although Lin Sanjiu had prepared for this, however, when she heard Mrs. Manas mentioned the word "die," she still could not help but let out a sigh, "Go ahead; I'm all ears."

"Have you already forgotten? No matter how strange this attraction is, it is still part of the Starry Carnival Amusement

Park." Although Mrs. Manas had never shown herself, she could scan Lin Sanjiu's mind for the information about the amusement park, "Not only this amusement park only trains Growth type posthumans, but in every game, it picks and trains only the strongest or the one with the highest potential. Am I right?"

Lin Sanjiu was dumbfounded. Then, she soon understood what Mrs. Manas's point was. If more than two Growth type posthumans participated in the same game at the same time, then the default difficulties of the game would be set based on the person with higher overall combat capabilities. Due to this damned setting, she had suffered when she participated in the same game with Hei Zeji.

"In any way, have you ever thought that," Mrs. Manas paused for a second as she tried to restructure her next sentence more tactfully, "Geran has survived for more than twenty days. And once you joined, he died."

At this moment, color instantly bled from Lin Sanjiu's face. She had indeed never thought about it.

Even though she tried her best to calm herself down, her tone belied her emotion. She stuttered, "My overall combat capabilities are higher than his, so the difficulties raised once I joined the game?" Lin Sanjiu still could not bring herself to believe this as the feeling of Bo "[I didn't kill Boren, but Boren died for me](#)" wasn't good for anybody in this world including her, "So, it's my fault that he died?"

"You can't say that it's your fault," Mrs. Manas sighed, "After all, rules are rules. If you want to blame something, blame his incapacabilities. Anyway, right now, you have to find out specifically what has changed in the attraction so that you can avoid falling into the same trap again."

Standing in a trance, Lin Sanjiu's mind was flooded with all sort of things. It was just that she wasn't sure if she was thinking about

Mrs. Manas's suggestion or about that "Geran."

With a bit of sorrow, she unconsciously paced around the unit in a circle and struggled to rummage through her vague memories for everything—even the smallest thing—that happened in the attraction.

The unit she was in was a rather large suite with one bedroom and one living room. As if the suite was built to maximize every single tile, the living room was huge, accompanied by an open kitchen and a dining hall. Lin Sanjiu was not interested in the bedroom, so she did not go look inside. When she rested her hand on the dining room table that was covered in all kinds of delicacies and drinks, her eyes locked on the window.

Similar to every unit in this apartment building, the window in this unit was also a realistic painting: white bricks, green tiles, and red lanterns. It was an alley diffused with the charm of traditional Chinese architecture and color schemes. It was drizzling, tricking one to believe that he or she could easily go into the alley from the window.

"I have no idea," Lin Sanjiu had a headache looking through her memories. She gave up, "If the difficulty raised once I joined the game, then there is no comparison for me to make, so how can I know which part of this game has become more difficult?"

Lin Sanjiu's question muted Mrs. Manas. She lowered her head and played with the foods on the dining table. Suddenly, she realized something that sent a chill down her spine.

"Why is there food here?"

Mrs. Manas heard her question and replied to her. "Have you forgotten again? Didn't the girl say that a unit room has anything you need."

"No, this isn't right."

Lin Sanjiu shook her head. She had checked unit 119 before, so

she was confident that this unit was empty. It was desolate and uninhibited. However...

She raised her eyes and studied the unit.

There was food on the dining table, just like in unit 101 where Garan had resided. The lamp was off when she entered the unit, but the lamp beside the couch had been turned on now, and a warm orange light diffused the unit. If somebody walked into this unit, he or she might think she was the owner of this unit—

"Am I becoming an "occupant" as well?"

As this idea dawned on Lin Sanjiu, her blood became cold. Then, a rattling sound drifted into her ears.

She jumped up quickly and glanced in the direction of the sound. The sound came from the door, but she saw nothing. After she studied the door and its proximity for a moment, only then did she see the A4 paper that was slipped in by somebody outside through bottom of the door.

"Dear Miss Lin of unit 119, to celebrate your new relocation into this apartment as well as to offer you permanent residence, we have decided to hold a neighborhood meeting for you."

There was only one line of words printed on the large A4 paper. While immersed in her confusion, she heard two knocks. Someone had knocked on something.

Her first reaction was to look at the door, but she was wrong. With a stiffened body, Lin Sanjiu turned her head around, looking into the painting behind the window.

She saw Livia.

"Hey, come over here," When Livia was speaking, she moved choppily as if she was made of some lousy computer-generated graphics, "Outside the window is the real sightseeing attraction. The exit is here. It'll be too late if you don't come out now!"

This saying came from an allusion. From wikipedia, During Emperor Yuen's reign, When Wang Dao, a chief advisor for Emperor Yien asked Zhou Yi (周顗, courtesy name of Boren), to intercede on his behalf when Wang Dun, his cousin rebelled. Zhou did and persuaded Emperor Yuan that Wang Dao was not involved in Wang Dun's rebellion—but in order to not make Wang Dao grateful for him, he chose not to respond to Wang Dao but instead cursed Wang Dun when Wang Dao begged him, causing Wang Dao to believe that he, like Liu Huai (劉隗) and Diao Xie (刁協), wanted to exterminate the Wang clan. Wang Dao did not find out what Zhou had done for him. Later, after Wang Dun successfully captured Jiankang, forcing Emperor Yuan to submit to him, he asked Wang Dao what he thought of Zhou, and Wang Dao said nothing—so Wang Dun executed Zhou. Later, when Wang found out from imperial archives the petitions that Zhou had submitted on his behalf, he mourned and gave the famous quote.

Chapter 355: Neighborhood Meeting

After Lin Sanjiu opened the door slightly, she did not stick her head out immediately. Instead, she stealthily stuck one hand out while holding a broken piece of mirror. Tilting the mirror, she caught the blurry reflection of the carpeted corridor outside.

After scavenging through unit 119, she finally found a mirror behind the door of a cupboard and chipped a piece off. As Lin Sanjiu was worried that even a reflection might work, she intentionally rubbed the surface of the mirror against a corner of a table a few times. She scratched the mirror until it became cloudy before she used it to check the situation outside.

She didn't really have a choice. For some reasons, ever since Lin Sanjiu entered this attraction, her five senses were just all messed up. It was as if she had reverted back to being a normal human. When she saw or heard something, it was usually too late for her to react.

Thankfully, that thing which was once Geran was no longer outside. While she stared at the reflection in her mirror for almost five minutes, there was seemingly no movements in the corridor.

Lin Sanjiu turned around and looked at the room in unit 119 again. She took a deep breath and pulled the door open.

The painting which depicted a small port on a rainy day was still behind her. The painting no longer had any quiet impressionistic charm. The part of the painting where Livia's face appeared was empty once more. All that was left was a misty, eerie-looking grayish-green port on a drizzling day.

She shifted her slightly uncomfortable shoulders and shot a quick glance at the corridor. Then, she closed her eyes. Her body shot out of the door the next second before her mind could even process anything. Closing her eyes, she found herself in full darkness as she nervously judged the distance between her steps.

Creak. She heard the sound of a door. Suddenly, it was as if something in the atmosphere had changed. However, she couldn't see a thing now, and she couldn't even detect what it was. Lin Sanjiu could feel her pores simultaneously contracting. The second she heard that sound, she extended her wings almost instinctively as if to protect herself. She stretched out her left arm and tried to see if she could touch anything for a split second before she sprinted up the stairs.

After racing up the stairs, Lin Sanjiu only stopped when she reached the second floor. Her heart was still pounding rapidly. She opened her eyes cautiously.

When her gaze shifted to the stairs, she could see "Geran's" deformed shadow stretching along its steps as if he was going to climb up.

"Geran had already moved into room 101, so he definitely can't come up," Lin Sanjiu comforted herself inwardly. Even though she did not knock the doors when she came up to the second floor this time, she certainly didn't want to stay any longer than necessary. Without staying for even half a second, Lin Sanjiu turned around and sped up the next flight of stairs.

The conversation she had with Livia ten minutes before surfaced in her mind as she replayed the sentences in her head.

"I can't say too much to you," a photo-like image of Livia moved choppily as if it was some lousy computer generated graphics. Livia's pupils were at the corner of her eyes one second and back in the center of her eyes the next second. "You've stayed in this room for more than 5 minutes so you're probably already considered as a "preparatory occupant". Check if there is bottled water in the room," Livia urged with an unstable, erratic voice.

Lin Sanjiu crushed the A4 paper with the "Neighborhood Meeting" tightly into a ball. She stared at the graphic-form Livia

and slowly walked in front of the dining table. With a quick glance, she knew that something was wrong—

There was no bottled water and only two carbonated sodas.

"Yes, this is the sign that you are a 'preparatory occupant'," Livia, in her graphical form, looked like she wanted to laugh. However, the corners of her mouth seemed to be frozen. "If you want to get water to survive, a 'preparatory occupant' has to go to the washroom to get water. I think this is some sort of hint. The 'sightseeing' really begins behind the window in the washroom. Once you enter, you will find the exit."

Lin Sanjiu froze for half a second before asking dryly, "And... how would you know?"

"After I entered unit 603, didn't you knock on the door? Before I could even react, an old woman suddenly materialized... I was startled so I didn't notice that the scenery behind the window in the room was actually a drawing. I turned around and leaped through the window... In a surprising turn of event, I found out the secret behind this building."

"But, you can't enter from this window. I think the window will only be accessible when the true owner of this unit appears. Anyway, you should go to the washroom on the 7th floor," Livia concluded and nodded at Lin Sanjiu as if she was unwilling to reveal anything more behind that glass window.

After that, Livia turned around as her image flickered. She disappeared from the window as if she had taken another route in front of her.

Lin Sanjiu fiddled with the paper ball in her hands disconcertingly for some time. The edges of the paper ball created indents in her palm. Going to the washroom on the 7th floor seemed to be the only choice laid out for her. Even though Lin Sanjiu was uncertain if Livia was telling the truth, she was not going to simply wait obediently in unit 119 for that stupid

"neighborhood meeting".

Jarring footsteps rang up the flight of stairs to the 3rd floor. Then, they stopped.

"What's wrong?" Mrs. Manas asked fretfully.

Lin Sanjiu crooked her head and thought for a moment. She suddenly turned around and walked down the stairs gingerly. As she tiptoed, she replied, "I suddenly remembered that I still need to do something."

She moved as lightly and slowly as she could. If one didn't pay attention, they might even assume that there was no one in the entire building.

Forty minutes later, the door of the washroom on the 7th floor opened with a creak, and Lin Sanjiu walked into it. Water had accumulated over the tiled floor of the washroom. The wet floor glistened under the white fluorescent light looking like it could cause a slip and fall accident anytime. Bzzt. Bzzt. The fluorescent light flickered in the gray and empty washroom.

Lin Sanjiu looked around herself and realized that the window in the male and the female washroom were not situated the same corresponding part of the washroom due to the structure of the building. Lin Sanjiu stepped through the water to the last cubicle in the washroom and opened it. She saw Livia's face in the window.

Lin Sanjiu could make out the scenery of a beach behind that face. Livia was standing extremely close to the window. Lin Sanjiu spotted the shadows of a few palm trees behind the image of Livia's face.

"You're finally here," Livia's eyes shifted rigidly from left to right as Lin Sanjiu approached, "Why did you take such a long time?"

Despite saying that, Livia didn't seem bothered by that and greeted Lin Sanjiu, "It's fine as long as you're here. Quick, prepare yourself and come in here. You can just open the glass window and stick your head in."

"Sure," Lin Sanjiu replied as she walked toward the window. Lin Sanjiu opened the window following Livia's instructions while she questioned, "So, the sceneries behind the windows are all connected?"

"Yes," Livia's black eyes moved downward as she eyed Lin Sanjiu's hand, "It's designed in this manner for the players to find the exit."

After Lin Sanjiu pulled open the window, a gust of sea breeze blew in. The wind ruffled Lin Sanjiu's fringe. Livia's face suddenly seemed a lot more lively and her expression seemed much smoother, "Yes. Yes. Just come in."

Lin Sanjiu smiled at Livia before raising her wings.

In a split second, before Livia even noticed anything amiss, Lin Sanjiu had already projected her skeletal wings toward the "painting" like bullets. The white sinister-looking wings, with their multiple sharp ends, thrust through the human face in the painting powered by Lin Sanjiu's incredible strength. There was a loud shriek. Livia's face was shredded along with the painting that fell to the ground in torn pieces. Lin Sanjiu pulled out her wings, took a few steps backward and looked cautiously at the painting.

That attack had damaged the bottom left corner of the painting. Livia's face was at that spot moments ago and Lin Sanjiu had vandalized it so badly that it was impossible to tell what it looked like originally. However, after that shriek, Livia's face disappeared from the torn pieces of paper and reassembled back on the painting perfectly intact. She moved from the bottom left corner to the bottom right corner of the painting. She glared at Lin Sanjiu with a pair of bloodshot eyes.

"You... Why did you attack me?" Livia's shoulders moved up and down as if she was panting while she questioned Lin Sanjiu.

"I should have thought of that long ago," Lin Sanjiu sighed lightly. "I think I owe you an apology."

Livia's eyes widened. She didn't say a word.

"Have you met another player called Geran? Even if you haven't, you must have met him by now... You and Geran came into this attraction before I did," Lin Sanjiu explained as she studied Livia's face. "When I entered, the difficulty suddenly increased. I am not sure what aspect of the attraction changed. But, both Geran and you died because of this."

Lin Sanjiu made a gesture and a pair of gold-rimmed spectacles appeared in her hand. "I found this in the male washroom... When I think about it, Geran probably met the same fate as you. He might have been tricked to enter that window..."

Livia eyed the spectacle frame and laughed coldly.

"I still don't know much about this place," Lin Sanjiu ignored her and looked down at the spectacles. She placed the spectacles on top of the toilet water tank. "For example, I don't know what would happen if a person entered a window. What state are you and Geran in? What kind of existence have both of you become? I can't figure the answers to those questions. The only thing I know is that you and Geran died because of me. That is also the reason why both of you want to trick and kill me."

"Then... why didn't you trust me?" Livia asked through the damaged painting with her head crooked.

"It is because of the occupants in the building." Lin Sanjiu replied. "You and Geran are different from the occupants living here. The difference is that both of you are not 'planned'... Both of you were actually players. Due to some reasons, both of you were tricked. You both died and were trapped here. Consequently, what

you and Geran said are not scripted by the attraction. In that case, whether you guys are right or wrong, the attraction only need me to know the information conveyed by the original occupants."

Lin Sanjiu looked at Livia's ashen face. Because Livia had crooked her head, Lin Sanjiu finally noticed that there was no neck and body beneath that realistic image of the woman's head. "Before I came here and saw you, I went to knock on all the doors that I have missed so I already got all the information I needed."

When Livia heard this, her pupils spun and shot to the back of her eyes such that only her sclera remained. Unexpectedly, Livia burst into shrieks of laughter.

"You are relying on the occupants here?" Livia sounded like she had heard something delightful and continued laughing uncontrollably. "If I knew you were someone so simple, I wouldn't even have wasted my effort. Just enjoy. Your neighborhood meeting is coming up."

Before her words faded, Lin Sanjiu felt a chill through her body and tensed up. The cubicle suddenly became dark.

When she looked under the door of the cubicle, she noticed that at some unknown time multiple pairs of legs had appeared. Long, short, fat, skinny. Lin Sanjiu saw legs of all assortments along with their different shoes. They were outside and only a door stood between them and Lin Sanjiu. Without looking up, Lin Sanjiu knew that there were some things looming over the four corners of the cubicle above her.

The figure blocked the dim light in the washroom, casting intercrossed shadows on her body. It was as if she was a plate of cuisine that was about to be eaten.

Knock. Knock. Someone knocked on the door of the cubicle. There was a pair of converse sneakers right in front of the door.

The girl's voice was supposed to be intoxicated, affected by

cigarette, alcohol and weed, yet she suddenly sounded very sober. "Are you that older sister? Open the door, please. I have something to tell you," the girl chuckled and said with an amiable and friendly tone.

The washroom was silent for a few seconds.

"Young lady, aren't you going to open the door?" the old woman's cheerful voice filled the air, "I'm old so it's really tiring for me to look at you through the gap at the bottom of the cubicle."

As she said that, a gray shadowy figure slowly appeared from under the door. It seemed to be the face of an old woman bending over. Lin Sanjiu first saw the old woman's curly hair and then her forehead...

Lin Sanjiu inhaled sharply and closed her eyes. She opened the door and stepped out of the cubicle. The light from the washroom shone through her eyelids. In the vague white light, Lin Sanjiu felt the shadows around her. With the "occupants" around her, Lin Sanjiu shut her eyes and walked forward.

Chapter 356: A Rare Sight

Lin Sanjiu walked one step at a time, slowly, as if to ascertain that her decision was right. As she did this, she remembered the conversations she had with the occupants in the building.

A tall svelte woman lived in unit 207. Standing straight, she was even a head taller than Lin Sanjiu. When that woman lowered her head to talk, she immediately reminded Lin Sanjiu of a giraffe. "That's right, you are not an official occupant, yet."

After a slight pause, she continued expressionless, "If you want to be an official occupant, you first need to meet another official occupant twice or more. I heard there's another way... but I don't know much about that."

There was a young couple living in unit 304. When the husband opened the door, his petite wife stood behind him saying cheerily, "I'm still in my nightie, please close the door first." However, Lin Sanjiu had already seen this tactic once so she immediately jammed her foot between the door. In the end, the husband answered her question.

"Can you get out through the windows? You must be joking! There is a proper exit, why would you go out through a window? The girl from unit 320 said that? Well, that's because she is an outsider. She can't find the exit so she stayed here... There is definitely an exit."

A young man who seemed like he was preparing for his exams lived in unit 411. He was holding a pen even when he opened the door and spoke impatiently. "I don't know how to answer your questions. If you wait a few minutes, my mum will be home. Come over, then. What? You won't come back again?"

After the young man heard that, he lowered his head, hiding his face in the shadows. After some time, he finally replied quietly, "Alright. If that's the case, I will tell you what I know. It isn't safe

outside this apartment building. Recently, we often have various burglars and drifters sneaking in. They create a lot of trouble. What? Of course, you can exit following how they enter.. But once you go out, you would become a drifter. Those people are not allowed to move into this apartment. Oh, why don't I show you? You can see some of those people from my window..."

Lin Sanjiu ran for her life. After she left unit 411, Lin Sanjiu headed to unit 608 and knocked on the door.

"You're just a preparatory occupant. I guess you don't have much in your room?" a plump middle-aged gentleman greeted her warmly. "Would you like some coffee?" he offered.

Lin Sanjiu shook her head immediately. The middle-aged gentleman placed his coffee pot down and squeezed his body between the half-opened door. He watched Lin Sanjiu with unblinking eyes and commented, "The security here is quite poor. Burglars come into our apartment from these windows. Random people also often come knocking on our doors. I can tolerate a person knocking once on my door. I get angry if they knock the second time... I stuffed the last person who knocked on my door through a window leading to the fire escape route. After that, I realized that it was one of our new friendly occupant who lives on the first floor."

There were six floors and Lin Sanjiu only avoided the first floor considering that Geran might be around. After avoiding the doors that she had already knocked on, Lin Sanjiu tried to get as much information from the remaining occupants. After she gathered quite a bit of information, she realized that she could classify their answers into a few categories. Of course, during this process, all the occupants tried every trick in the book to convince Lin Sanjiu to knock on their door a second time.

Nevertheless, Lin Sanjiu finally got a general idea of her situation.

First, this attraction was split into two areas. Behind the familiar corridors of the apartment building was another hidden and more dangerous "out-of-the-window world". According to what the occupants said, there were "burglars and drifters" in the "out-of-the-window world". People who went out of the building could never come back. However, those "people" outside of the building would occasionally appear in the apartment building and create "trouble" for the occupants. Meanwhile, the occupants, like the middle-aged gentleman, could use force or trickery to get players to exit from the windows...

Even though Lin Sanjiu was unable to fully get to the bottom of the truth, she managed to reconstruct a timeline very close to the truth.

After she entered this attraction, "out-of-the-window world" was the new death trap that appeared after the difficulty of the attraction was raised. When she knocked on unit 601, Geran ran up to the seventh floor. From the spot where his spectacles had fallen, Lin Sanjiu guessed that Geran might have seen the other player, who had been previously thrown out of a window by the middle-aged gentleman, behind the window in the washroom. According to the middle-aged gentleman, Geran trusted that person to a certain extent.

However, the "person" outside the window was naturally no longer human.

Since Geran was a cautious person, Lin Sanjiu was sure that the man wouldn't just jump through any of the windows without thinking. Yet, it might be his careful nature that finally caused his demise within this building. Just as the giraffe-like woman had said, he might have turned into an "official occupant" through the second method and officially moved into unit 101.

After what had happened to him, Livia climbed out of a window for some reason. It was very possible that things unfolded just as she recounted. She might have jumped out of the window when

she was scared by the old woman and found herself trapped in the "out-of-the window world".

Lin Sanjiu knew that, if she had not entered the attraction, Geran and Livia would not have died because of the windows. From a certain perspective, their later actions seemed like a form of revenge. On top of that, the information hidden between the words of the occupants was meant to confuse her. For example, the girl in unit 320 was actually providing information to distinguish between official occupants and preparatory occupants, whereas the old woman was talking about the "out-of-the-window world". Thus, Lin Sanjiu got the wrong impression that the windows were exits and nearly got tricked by Livia.

"The 'Neighborhood Meeting' is probably the last stage in this particular round."

At least, all that was Lin Sanjiu's conjecture.

As she walked past the "neighbors", Lin Sanjiu guessed that she probably would never forget that feeling.

The lights suddenly became so bright that she could even see white behind her eyelids. The gazes she received seemed almost tangible. Even though she met no one on her way to the washroom, she was somehow aware that she was walking through a crowd of "humans".

The "occupants" were standing very close to her. In fact, they were a little too close. Lin Sanjiu felt an itch on her left face. It felt like someone's hair had brushed past her face. When she thought about it, that sensation was the feeling of moving eyelashes when someone blinks.

A pair of eyeballs was directly in contact with her face.

That thought was enough to make her shudder and she really had the urge to open her eyes.

"Geran, are you here?" Lin Sanjiu suddenly called out softly as

she walked outward based on her memory. She did not dare to stick her hand out as she was afraid that she might touch something so she walked very slowly. "You must be here..." Lin Sanjiu's eyelids trembled a little just like her voice.

No one answered even after some time.

"I'm sorry," Lin Sanjiu finally apologized after ruminating about it for some time.

Even though Lin Sanjiu knew that it was not her fault, her throat felt dry when she remembered Geran's expression when he stopped her from seeking out the occupant in unit 320 the second time.

If he did not help her and decided to ignore her, she might have died instead of him. Lin Sanjiu felt that Geran was probably around and was choosing to remain silent even after her apology. Lin Sanjiu sighed inwardly. She tried to suppress her feelings of fear and guilt while she placed her focus on sensing everything around.

After she closed her eyes and concentrated, her "muddled" senses slowly became clearer. As her perception of her surroundings returned to normal, Lin Sanjiu knew that she was walking in the right direction. Bang. After that sound, Lin Sanjiu felt a breeze. As the wind toyed with her hair, she felt her heartbeat finally returning to normal.

"Congratulations, you have completed the first round of Haunted House Dare".

Lin Sanjiu stood tensely like wound-up spring. Lin Sanjiu opened her eyes gingerly only after she was sure that she could feel sunlight on her shoulders. She saw the same broad-shouldered young woman behind the glass window of the ticket booth.

"Your performance was unimpressive so you only earned 6 stamina points. Please come here to collect your points," the ticket

seller said.

Lin Sanjiu turned to look behind. She saw the familiar warehouse-like building. A roller shutter was closing behind her. The apartment building, the dark red wooden doors, Geran... There was no longer a single trace of these things.

Lin Sanjiu rushed up to the window of the ticket booth abruptly. She swung open her large skeletal wings furiously. She angled her wings such that their sharp tips were pointing at the glass window of the ticket booth.

Crash!

The glass window immediately shattered as Lin Sanjiu pierced the glass with her wings. The young woman behind the glass sat panic-stricken under the shadows of Lin Sanjiu's wings and seemed at a total loss.

However, Lin Sanjiu stopped her attack the next second when she heard a female voice coming from the speakers in the attraction.

"Player 57, please take note. If you don't stop attacking our staff, 50 stamina points will be deducted as a punishment. Player 57, please take note..."

Though Lin Sanjiu had stopped attacking, she could not curb her anger. She swung her arms and a few large pieces of glass flew toward the young woman. "Haunted House Dare? It is a haunted house! How is it a 'sightseeing attraction'!"

"According to the original setup, I am not supposed to tell you what this attraction is beforehand," the young woman gulped. Her actions and expression were no different from that of a normal person. She did not seem like a being within a pocket dimension. "Besides, how many people have ever seen ghosts? Who cares about mountains and rivers, don't you think that was a real sight to behold?"

Lin Sanjiu's chest rose and fell in anger. She stayed in the same spot for some time before she finally let out a sigh.

"I see..." Mrs. Manas finally also spoke up. "I see! That was why you can't attack them and they don't attack you!"

"Yes," the young woman sat up straight once again amidst the broken glass. "When you enter a haunted attraction, which amusement park will let you attack their staff? Naturally, our staff will not touch you."

"Staff..."

Lin Sanjiu felt a bitterness in her mouth. Would Geran and Livia be forever trapped in that world behind the windows? Two lives treated like a joke?

"If a player is unable to complete the first round, what will happen to them?" Lin Sanjiu asked quietly.

The young woman shot a quick glance at her. She did not answer Lin Sanjiu directly. She seemed to be worried that Lin Sanjiu would risk losing 50 stamina points and vent her anger out on her. After mulling for some time, the young woman chose a few careful words, "It depends on their luck. Some people who don't lose hope might not necessarily be trapped forever..."

Even though there was only a slim chance, it was better than having no hope at all.

Lin Sanjiu exhaled and wiped her face once before looking at her surroundings.

She found out that she had walked out from the same roller shutter. Everything around her looked exactly the same so she couldn't tell how long she had been in the attraction. When she asked the ticket seller that question, the young woman searched through the broken glass and her overturned table and found a watch.

"You didn't take much time. You only spent four hours."

"Four hours..." Lin Sanjiu frowned. Lin Sanjiu wondered if Puppeteer managed to clear his station in that amount of time. In any case, what's done is done. She knew that she had to complete the remaining rounds as quickly as she could to chase up to Puppeteer.

"Okay, give me my stamina points. I want to take part in the next round," Lin Sanjiu demanded, raising her wrist.

The broad-shouldered young woman quickly picked up a device from the floor and waved it over Lin Sanjiu's wrist. "The set will be different, don't try anything funny," the ticket seller added, probably afraid of Lin Sanjiu's temper.

When the roller shutter slowly opened again, Lin Sanjiu glared at the ticket sellers once more. She sighed and took her first step toward the entrance. Unexpectedly, before she took another step, a pair of feet appeared behind the roller shutter. Next, a person walked out from the shadow of the roller shutter.

"Oh? Miss Lin. Why are you here? I was looking for you. What a coincidence!" Aker exclaimed sounding a little surprised as his eyes widened.

Chapter 357: Business is Business

When the roller shutter moved slowly upward once again, the west-bound sun dyed the cement floor near the shutter a shade of vermilion. Despite the warm, orange-red sunlight did nothing to improve the color complexion of the woman standing behind the shutter.

Lin Sanjiu walked out from the second round of "Haunted House Dare" appearing to be almost sheet white from head to toe. The color of her skin was close to the color of her wings. It was as if something had drawn all the blood from her body. Anyone who saw her at that moment would need more than a second to verify that she was still alive.

Aker sat at the entrance, smoking. When he heard the sound of the roller shutter opening, he leaped up. He turned to look behind him and stared at Lin Sanjiu as if slightly taken aback, "How did you end up like this?"

Lin Sanjiu looked up and her appearance scared Aker immediately. Even though Lin Sanjiu's eyes were light-colored. Their color was now so faint that her eyes were almost fully white. It was creepy. It took a long time before Lin Sanjiu gradually regained a bit of color and vigor. Her eyes slowly returned to their natural color.

Sighing, she walked to the ticket seller and obtained 12 stamina points before sitting beside Aker. It was really a coincidence when she met Aker after the end of the previous round. After questioning Aker, she found out that he entered the attraction 30 minutes later than her and had also just completed the first round.

To avoid the situation with Geran and Livia, Lin Sanjiu and Aker decided not to participate in the "Haunted House Dare" at the same time. They decided that they would take turns to enter the attraction. Lin Sanjiu did not know if Aker's round was easier or if

he was just capable, but he took less than two hours to complete his second round. After that, he smoked while he waited for Lin Sanjiu to complete her second round.

"I don't want to talk about it," Lin Sanjiu couldn't help trembling when she recalled what had happened during the second round. She wasn't willing to discuss any details. "The first round is just a house made of candy compared to the second round."

Aker nodded his head understandingly. The young man was in the same long robe as he held his cigarette and commented, "After all, this is a pocket dimension for Growth-types... sigh."

"In the past, I thought that only our physical attributes would improve," Lin Sanjiu looked down at her own body when she brought this topic up. "After I entered this pocket dimension, I realized that any aspect of our being can be improved, regardless whether we are aware of it. I think this might be a good thing but a person can die really quickly here if they enter these attractions without any preparation."

Lin Sanjiu wasn't exaggerating. The first round of Haunted House Dare was bad enough. But, once the second round started, Lin Sanjiu found out that she had underestimated this pocket dimension. The demands in terms of her observation, eidetic memory, analytic ability, courage and bravery for the second round was very much higher. This round, Lin Sanjiu barely had the resources to deal with the challenges. She didn't even know how she escaped. For the next round, using her [Consciousness Mimicry] might be unavoidable.

"You should have a proper rest before the third round," Aker put out his cigarette casually and tossed it. It fell to the ground far away from them. "I was too caught up with completing this station, I forgot to discuss something with you."

Lin Sanjiu gave Aker a slightly skeptical glance before laughing, "If you are going talk about that plan of yours, I'm sorry but my

hands are tied. When Livia and I went to check on the situation previously, the thing Santa Claus gave me—"

"I know," Aker interjected and smiled at her. His cheekbones rose when he smiled, making his face look even more elongated. "Zagger told me what he had witnessed. As for what he didn't see, I more or less could infer."

"Okay... I am useless for your plan now."

"Cough. Miss Lin, you are too direct," Aker slipped his hands back into his robe. His robe immediately slipped downward. "We can both benefit from this, so we should definitely work together... I know you are not someone that likes to beat around the bush. Let me put it this way. The plans have changed and I'm hoping to get some help from you."

Lin Sanjiu frowned, "Help?"

"Even though Progressor Alliance is currently coerced by Puppeteer to be here, we are still one of the administrators of Red Nautilus. I have already given all members I can mobilize in this amusement park their own missions." Aker used a tone as if he was trying to convince Lin Sanjiu, "I do believe that our plan would work but I hope to get your assistance so that we have a better chance of success. This involves keeping Puppeteer in a particular location. He only needs to be delayed for two hours."

After saying that, Aker looked at Lin Sanjiu as he waited a little anxiously for her answer. It was obvious that Aker wasn't going to divulge more details about their plans unless Lin Sanjiu showed more interest to help.

"Why don't you use your own members to delay him?" Lin Sanjiu questioned instead. "What do you plan to do after delaying him?"

"That's not possible," Aker replied bitterly. "Have you forgotten? Our members are affected by his ability. If he is unhappy, he can turn us all into puppets. Without our lives, what's there to plan?"

Aker reminded her.

"As for the next step, I already have an alternative. Even though the Santa hat might not be with you, we can proceed with this evil vs. evil plan with some changes..." Beneath his slight messy and curly hair, Aker's eyes darted toward Lin Sanjiu. "I have sent quite a few members to the entrances of the amusement park. They should be loitering around the entrances now. If Santa Claus doesn't give up on his plans, he would definitely find for another Growth-type to enter the amusement park. I am sure I will get a paper crane when one of our people get that Santa hat. It should be soon. I'm not going to paint a rosy picture for you. I am sure this is somewhat risky for you but I trust that with your capabilities, you should be able to escape."

When Lin Sanjiu did not give him any response, Aker grew a little anxious. He walked closer to Lin Sanjiu and explained further, "To be honest, the other reason why I need your help is because Puppeteer has a grudge with you. It is quite reasonable for you to confront and cause trouble for him so he probably won't suspect anything. Sure, I understand. This is quite troublesome for you and there isn't really anything in it for you... How 'bout this? Once we leave the amusement park, if you need help from Progressor Alliance, just state your request and we will acquiesce! We might be small but we still have resources such as our various bases and consular officers... Your share of the rewards from this pocket dimension is also negotiable."

Lin Sanjiu eyed Aker.

From the incident with Santa Claus, Lin Sanjiu knew that Aker was a crafty person. Thankfully, he was also a person that was willing to show his cards and was transparent about his intentions. He had a sort of objective, somewhat "business is business" attitude.

There was only one thing that Aker did not discuss openly. However, both Lin Sanjiu and Aker knew what it was. Once

Puppeteer and Santa Claus were removed from the equation, Progressor Alliance had the greatest chance of getting the present at the final pitstop. Notwithstanding the desperation to escape from Puppeteer's control, that present was probably another reason why Aker would go to such lengths to create this plan...

If Lin Sanjiu looked at the situation from another perspective, she knew that she would look for Puppeteer even without this request. She still needed to get Reno and Rena's current location from Puppeteer. Besides, if she did manage to save them, those two kids would fare better in Progressor Alliance with Aker backing them up...

"If I agree to your request," Lin Sanjiu said slowly, "what do I need to do exactly?"

The eyes of the tall and skinny young man, who wrapped himself in his robe like Dracula, lit up instantly.

"We have Puppeteer's exact coordinates. Even if he moves a meter, we'll know." Aker laughed confidently, "Additionally, we have strength in numbers. After we entered the amusement park, we spread ourselves out so we have clear intel of the situation on each route. Once I receive information that our people have been marked by Santa Claus' Santa hat magnet, I will plan the shortest route for you to reach Puppeteer. When you meet him, it is best that you do not enter an attraction with him for your own safety. Just try to delay him outside."

"If you could delay him for two hours, that would be ideal. If you can't, you need to delay him for at least an hour. Meanwhile, our members will try to reach you via the fastest route. As you leave, we will use the Santa hat to summon Santa Claus. The rest is up to fate and them."

Lin Sanjiu didn't find anything in the plan that did not sit well with her, other than the fact that she might need to spend a longer time than expected with Puppeteer. After all, she wasn't even a

worthy target to both Santa Claus and Puppeteer.

"Where is Puppeteer now?" Lin Sanjiu asked despite knowing the answer. She didn't know how the people from Progressor Alliance could track Puppeteer. Actually, not every staff knew the exact location of each player. Even the plump store owner only knew a general location.

"He's on Pumpkin Route. He had just completed his fifth station," Aker replied unreservedly. He even provided her additional information she did not know. "Pumpkin Route's difficulty is quite high, so there are fewer stations... If Puppeteer continues without changing routes, he will reach the final pitstop after completing the next two stations."

Lin Sanjiu nodded. Aker's words verified her conjecture. If Aker only wished to free Progressor Alliance from Puppeteer's control, it was completely unnecessary to execute the plan to delay Puppeteer before he reached the pitstop. However, Lin Sanjiu couldn't be bothered with all these complicated plans and schemes.

"Okay," Lin Sanjiu agreed. Since she had already made up her mind, she didn't want to mull over it too much. "If it is possible to split the present at the final pitstop, I want 30%. If it can't be split, you can compensate me with other means."

Since they were going to work together, they had better work things out properly.

"That's no problem!" Aker consented without missing a beat. He stuck out his hand, beaming from ear to ear. When Lin Sanjiu reached to shake his hand, she felt that his fingertips were icy cold.

"It is decided then. I hope we'll work well together, Miss Lin." Aker stood up as he said that. "Since we have settled the big matters, let's complete this haunted attraction as soon as possible. Going back to the topic, the stations in Swan Route are all very tricky. I wonder why you chose this route in the first place."

"Why are you so familiar with the stations in these routes?" Lin Sanjiu asked a little inquisitively.

"Cough. There are only 12 routes in the Starry Carnival Amusement Park. We definitely have more than 12 members in Progressor Alliance. Before we entered the amusement park, we already agreed on how we can communicate with each other. I am collating all the information about events and situations that our members meet as they explore their own routes. With all the information we have gathered, we can more or less get a general picture.

"It is quite hard to imagine a small organization like ours would actually use a 'strength in numbers' strategy," Aker showed a self-deprecating smile.

Suddenly, Lin Sanjiu couldn't help thinking of Reno and Rena. If the two kids were with her, this place would probably be more like an "amusement park"...

Just as Lin Sanjiu expected, Haunted House Dare was a rare nightmare for her. Even though she had experienced so much, and had been to Kisaragi Station, she nearly had a nervous breakdown midway of the third round. In fact, if Mrs. Manas didn't prompt her to use her [Consciousness Mimicry] in time, Lin Sanjiu would probably be trapped in the haunted house for a long time.

After Lin Sanjiu imitated Nüwa with her ability, the thing that saved her wasn't the woman's wisdom but Nüwa's incredible willpower. Before this experience, Lin Sanjiu never believed that anyone could be unaffected by their own emotions. However, with Nüwa's steel-like willpower, the emotions that Lin Sanjiu had accumulated beforehand simply disappeared like they did not exist in the first place. Rationality and absolute composure, these were the only two things Lin Sanjiu experienced.

When Lin Sanjiu came out of the Haunted House Dare attraction the last time, she felt as if she had finally returned to the real world

after a lifetime.

"You're finally out," Aker had already been waiting outside for some time. "Your difficulty level for the attraction must be pretty high."

Lin Sanjiu was exhausted. She wanted to give him a perfunctory smile but she couldn't even move her muscles.

"Do you need to rest for a while?" Aker asked after looking at her for some time. He frowned. He took his hands out from his robe and stretched out one of them. There was a small paper crane lying in his hand. "When you were inside, I received information that Santa Claus had released one of our comrades into the amusement park. He is now holding on to that small Santa hat magnet. Our plan commences."

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